DH on Saturday

DECCAN HERALD
The Power of Good

China backs B'desh in upholding sovereignty

P10

Locals walk amid rubble of buildings in La Guaira state, Venezuela. AFP

Venezuela toll reaches 920 amid desperate rescue efforts

LA GUAIRA (VENEZUELA), AFP: The death toll from two powerful earthquakes that devastated Venezuela earlier this week rose to 920 on Friday, National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez said, as rescuers boosted by international teams raced to find survivors beneath collapsed buildings.

Rescuers used heavy machinery but also just bare hands in a race to pluck out people caught under rubble in the earthquake zone west of the capital Caracas.

The dead include foreigners, with nine Portuguese nationals, three Spaniards, two Brazilians, two Chinese nationals and one Italian-Venezuelan so far among those killed.

The official toll was expected to keep rising.

The previous official toll from the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 quakes that hit the country had been 589.

Phone prices spike as chip crunch bites

Shortage likely to continue beyond 2027: Int'l data corpn

ROHIT KVN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Acute global storage chipset crunch began in late 2025, driven mainly by Big Tech firms' rapid scaling of generative Artificial Intelligence data centre infrastructure. With Google, Microsoft, NVIDIA, and OpenAI having secured big, lucrative deals with semiconductor companies, the latter are offering limited chipset allocation to smartphone makers.

For the past 18 months, the prices of DRAM (Dynamic Random Access Memory) and NAND flash storage chipsets have increased by 600%, pushing smartphone brands to struggle with costs and specifications.

The only available options are to increase the product's price and pass the burden to customers, undertake cost-cutting measures such as using outdated chipsets, removing premium components (the telephoto lens in the camera), and replacing OLED with LCD panels, sell refurbished older phones, or shelve smartphone launches.

Recently, CMF, Nothing Inc's subsidiary, dropped the launch of CMF Phone 3 Pro.

"We were working on a successor, but with memory prices where they are right now, we can't build a phone that feels like a genuine step forward at a price that makes sense for CMF. As a result, we've decided not to launch a new CMF phone this year. We'd rather be upfront about that than ship something we're not proud of," said Akis Evangelidis, co-founder & India President, Nothing.

The prices of storage and RAM components for a phone priced at Rs 40,000 were around Rs 2,000 in mid-2025, but now they have risen to more than Rs 12,000. That's more than the price of most budget phones in India.

Almost all brands have increased the prices of smartphones launched in 2026 by anywhere between 20 and 30%. For now, Apple, though it has increased the prices of iPads, MacBooks, and other products, has spared the iPhone.

In the first quarter of 2026 in India, barring a few such as Nothing Inc, Xiaomi, Motorola, and Oppo, all other major brands, such as Vivo, OnePlus, Realme, Poco, iQOO, and Apple, suffered a decline in shipments. Samsung registered flat growth. The highly competitive budget (under Rs 10,000) segment suffered the most with a 59% decline.

▸ Phone, Page 3B

SMARTPHONE PRICE HIKE (Jan 2026 onwards)

Samsung	Rs 500 to Rs 3,000
OnePlus	Rs 1,000 to Rs 13,000
Vivo	Rs 1,000 to Rs 8,000
Oppo	Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000
Xiaomi	Rs 1,500 to Rs 4,000
Realme	Rs 1,000 to Rs 7,000
Nothing	Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000
Motorola	Rs 500 to Rs 8,500
iQOO	Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000
Lava	Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000

Source: Beebom Gadgets

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KSEAB to digitise answer scripts on pilot basis

Only student in question will have access to answer script

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Department of School Education and Literacy has decided to digitise the answer scripts of exams conducted by the Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB). However, in a bid to avoid the initiative being hobbled by technical snags, the department has decided to carry it out on an experimental basis.

The digitised answer scripts will be password-protected, access to which will be restricted to the student in question. Authorities said that the move was aimed at ushering in greater transparency and accountability.

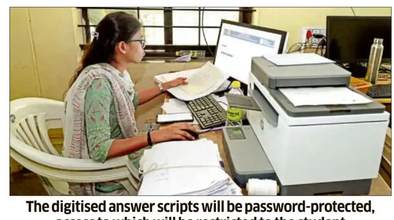
As part of the pilot project, answer scripts of 'other' examinations – for vocational courses, music and dance – conducted by the KSEAB will be digitised.

RASHMI MAHESH
Additional Chief Secretary, Department of School Education

"On a pilot basis, we will digitise answer scripts of other exams conducted by the KSEAB this year. The aim is to usher in greater transparency to the entire process.

"The number of answer scripts for these exams will be fewer," said a School Education and Literacy Department official.

The department fears that technical difficulties could derail the execution of the project if it is tried for SSLC and second-year PU exams given the enormous volume of answer scripts. "We want to proceed with a tried-and-tested model. If digitisation of answer scripts for other exams is successful, we will go ahead with the initiative for major exams," the official added.



The digitised answer scripts will be password-protected, access to which will be restricted to the student in question. DH FILE PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

Under the current system, the board provides the digitised/ scanned copy of an answer script only to those students who apply for a photocopy of the same. Digitisation of all answer scripts will ensure their availability to all students.

The Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) was the first varsity in the state to employ digitisation in its evaluation process, and has a software of its own for the purpose. The KSEAB will be provided the same software for its digitisation initiative. VTU has, in fact, shared its expertise with other varsities including the Bangalore University.

Pointing to VTU's proven track record, sources said that they do not expect difficulties in the incorporation of digitisation into the evaluation process. "It will be introduced gradually for SSLC and second PU exams," a source said.

KPTCL has no power to hike supervision charges: HC

Quashes demand notice issued to Mumbai-based realty firm

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL) has no power to hike supervision charges on its own, the High Court of Karnataka has ruled recently. Justice Ravi V Hosmani said this while quashing a demand notice issued to the petitioner Anushka Realty Inc, Kandivali, Maharashtra.

The petitioner firm had sought power supply of 8459 KW, for its multi-storey residential project at Kyalasanahalli village, KR Puram hobli in Bengaluru. The Bescom approved the power supply subject to conditions, including payment of supervision charges at 10% of estimated cost of Rs 4,35,82,608 but not exceeding Rs 15,00,000. Meanwhile, the KPTCL issued a demand notice for Rs 1,20,49,000 as supervision charges on the grounds that supervision charges under Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (Electric Supply and Distribution) Code, had not been revised since 2005.

The counsel for the petitioner argued that under the Electricity Act there are limited powers/functions conferred upon KPTCL which include planning, coordination, transmission of electricity and allied operational responsibilities etc. which do not include fixing or revising supervision charges.

On the other hand, the KPTCL argued that the Rs 15 lakh ceiling on supervision charges for self-execution projects was found insufficient and hence higher revision was required to meet actual administrative and technical costs of high-level supervision for modern and large-scale projects. It was further submitted that the KERC had issued a communication stating that it is for the KPTCL to take suitable action based on account manuals framed by it.

Justice Hosmani noted that mere statement in reply by KERC would not provide sufficient justification for revision/ demand or be construed as formal approval or regulatory determination authorizing revision of charges. The court said that Section 45 (5) of the Electricity Act specifies that charges fixed by distribution licensee shall be in accordance with provisions of Act and Regulations framed by KERC.

"Levy of supervision charges affecting consumers and prescribing monetary liability cannot be regarded as purely administrative action, when Section 45 of the Electricity Act stipulated procedure for such fixation. In absence of KPTCL sourcing its authority to revise supervision charges beyond ceiling prescribed under regulatory framework, impugned order prescribing slab-wise supervision charges, as also demand notice issued to the petitioner cannot sustain," the court said while directing KPTCL and Bescom to permit the petitioner to resume/complete work under self-execution by paying the prevailing supervision charges treating it as sufficient.

RGUHS Foundation Day celebrations tomorrow

BENGALURU, DHNS: Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) will commemorate its 31st Foundation Day alongside the Nashamuktha Bharath Abhiyan, and the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 28 at the Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru.

Vice-President of India C P Radhakrishnan will be the chief guest at the event that will be presided over by Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, who is also the Chancellor of the varsity. Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer will be in attendance at the event.

Interacting with journalists on Friday, RGUHS Vice-Chancellor Dr Bhagavan B C pointed to the role educational institutions played in promoting a healthy lifestyle, and helping prevent drug abuse.

"The campaign encourages students to act as ambassadors for a drug-free society by raising awareness both among their peers and their communities," he added.

The Foundation Day celebrations will conclude with a collective pledge by participants to uphold the values of academic excellence, ethical healthcare service, social responsibility, and to contribute towards building a healthier and drug-free India.

Power generation comes to halt at Linganamakki

SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS: Following a dry spell in catchment area of Linganamakki dam in the last one week, power generation in one of the units of Linganamakki power house near Kargal in Sagar taluk, has been suspended from Thursday.

According to Chief Engineer of Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (electricity) Anand Kumar, water level in Linganamakki dam is decreasing due to poor rainfall. The dam is the source for five hydropower plants in Sharavathi valley. The installed capacity of the power house is 55 MW (27.5 MW from two units).

Guv's 'eagerness' to expedite VC appointment process raises eyebrows

S K NRUPATHUNGA
SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS

Governor and Chancellor Thaawarchand Gehlot's letter to Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, urging the latter to immediately appoint vice-chancellors to the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Dharwad and the Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, has drawn flak from experts.

In the absence of a dedicated agriculture minister, the CM holds the portfolio making him ultimately responsible for the appointment of VCs to these varsities.

Experts expressed suspicions over the governor's eagerness to expedite the appointment process. More so, Gehlot has ignored petitions submitted by experts demanding the removal of - S V Suresha, VC of UAS, Bangalore and Rajendra Prasad, retired VC, both accused in a corruption and dereliction of duty case filed in 2023 - as heads of VC search committees for the Shivamogga and Dharwad universities. Experts have, in fact, called on the CM to dissolve the search committees, and appoint suitable persons to head the panels.

In his letter to the CM, dated June 9, Gehlot wrote, "Temporary arrangements made in the absence of a regular VC often lead to unwanted and avoidable litigations. The lack of a VC also leads to loss of valuable time and opportunities for students."

Gehlot urged the CM to direct the Agriculture Department to conclude its meetings with the search committees at the earliest so as to avoid administrative delays. This, the Governor said, would ensure that the search panels shortlist the names of suitable candidates, which would be forwarded to the state government, and thereafter to the Governor. Citing the students' interests, the governor also pointed out to the research undertaken at the varsities, not to mention the various programmes taken up to aid farmers.

Retired professor of UAS Bangalore Prakash Kammaradi told *DH* that they wanted the appointment process to be fair and unbiased. "The governor's intervention is required to dissolve the two search committees. There are allegations of misappropriation of funds, besides questions over irregularities in the recruitment process, against incumbent VCs of agriculture and allied universities. A high-level committee must be constituted to probe these allegations," he said.

Retired faculties approach Lokayukta

The Forum of Retired Faculty, Scientists and Alumni of University of Agricultural Sciences has raised an objection to nominating "tainted" persons as members of committee for selection of VCs of Agriculture University of Shivamogga and Dharwad.

The Forum has filed a complaint before the Lokayukta in this regard.

The Search Committee meeting of University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad (UAS) is scheduled for July 3 and that for Keladi Shivappanayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences is scheduled for July 4.

The Forum has urged the Lokayukta to intervene, as the cases regarding the persons nominated as chairman of the committees are pending before it.

"Considering that cases are pending against the persons nominated as chairman for the search committee, the Lokayukta should recommend the government and the concerned authorities to stop the selection process," the Forum urged.

It further stated that heads of both the committees have been appointed by the government in violation with the University Grants Commission norms.

DH on Saturday

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WHACKY VERSE

NEET work

With a question paper leak
Student futures look bleak.
Our politicians fight
All day and night—
Only to forget it in a week.

Ireland shock T20 world champions India

Hollard, Humphreys take 3 wickets each in 34-run win

P15

An ecologist's scuba diving adventures

A skilled ecologist with a passion for diving examines the immediate threat faced by our oceans

It's no secret that our oceans are under serious threat. Plastic waste and rising temperatures have greatly disturbed the global underwater ecosystem. Ecologists say initiatives such as the Great Nicobar Project—a Rs 72,000-crore infrastructure project by the government—are only going to further disrupt the already fragile environment.

In this week's Saturday Story, a terrestrial ecologist, who has an affinity for scuba diving, offers an account of his underwater adventures through the lens of ecology.

The SATURDAY STORY

After talking to other ecologists and marine biologists, he learns that the future looks bleak. Infrastructural projects and unscientific restoration efforts stand in the way of recovery. Our survival depends on our oceans, and it is an urgent need to allow them to restore themselves, he finds.

Full story, Page 13

8 held over Ram temple cash row

Rs 80 lakh recovered; buzz over Trust general secretary Champat Rai's resignation

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Amid a massive backlash over the alleged 'embezzlement' of crores of rupees of cash offerings at the Ram temple, Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai is said to have resigned on Friday even as eight of the nine people, against whom an FIR was lodged on Thursday, were arrested.

Champat Rai

Though sources said Rai and another key member of the Trust Anil Mishra submitted their resignations to Trust chairman Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, Rai has neither confirmed nor denied the development. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad too said it was not aware of Rai's resignation.

Both Rai and Mishra were in the eye of the storm following allegations of 'embezzlement' and Opposition parties had sought their removal from the Trust saying that an impartial probe was not possible as long as they remained at the helm.

Interestingly, neither Rai's nor Mishra's name figured in the FIR.

Eight of the nine people, whose names figured in the FIR, were arrested late on Thursday night. They would be produced before a local court in Ayodhya where the police could seek their custody.

The prosecution lawyer said that around Rs 80 lakh were recovered from seven accused persons separately. No recovery was made from one of the accused.

He said five to six of the arrested were bank employees deployed for counting cash donations and were drawing salaries from the bank. He, however, declined to identify the bank employees.

▸ Ram Temple, Page 5

Cong demands probe by SC judge

The Congress on Friday demanded a probe by a sitting Supreme Court judge and dissolution of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust following the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.
Details on Page 9

Don't play with Rambhakts' faith: Yogi

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday cautioned against what he termed attempts being made to 'defame' Ayodhya and warned that those 'playing' with the faith of the people would not be spared under any circumstances.
Details on Page 9

Kalyana K'taka in grip of spurious toddy

Dists bordering Telugu states see high use of illegal booze

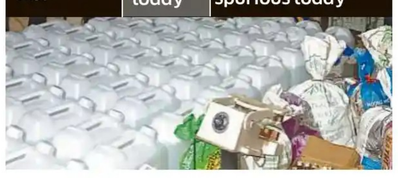
PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

The excise department has seized around 1,500 kg of chloral hydrate (CH) powder, a key ingredient in the manufacture of spurious toddy, from across the state in the last three years, with the Kalyana Karnataka region reporting most of the seizures. The department also seized 42,927 litres of toddy, worth Rs 47 crore, manufactured using the powder, in the same period.

According to documents obtained from the department, the seven districts of Kalyana Karnataka reported the highest consumption of this illicit liquor, which has a direct impact on the central nervous system of humans.

FATAL HIGH

- Chloral hydrate banned for human use under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act
- Spurious toddy is cheaper, gives more 'kick'
- CH used to produce spurious toddy
- CH-mixed toddy impacts central nervous system
- Kalyana K'taka tops seizure of spurious toddy



CM warns officials

CM D K Shivakumar on Friday rebuked excise officials and said he would consider a new law to shunt them to other departments if they tarnish the government's image. Shivakumar's warning came a day after the ED said it found huge corruption in the department.
Details on Page 4

As many as 771 people have been arrested in connection with the production or consumption of spurious toddy over the last three years.

▸ Spurious toddy, Page 5
Excise dept runs like money-laundering machine, Page 4

SC paves way to rectify 'illegal sentences'

NEW DELHI, DHNS: In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has held that an accused cannot demand continuation of a sub-minimum punishment erroneously awarded by a trial court, clearing the way for appellate courts to correct such "illegal sentences" even in appeals filed by convicts.

The court upheld the Sikkim High Court's decision to enhance the sentence of two men convicted in a gang rape case from 12 years to the mandatory 20-year rigorous imprisonment.

The ruling is expected to have wider implications in cases where trial courts erroneously award sentences below the minimum prescribed by law.
Details on Page 8

Vijayendra in Dharmasthala: No links with Shivakumar

NAINA J A
MANGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka BJP President B Y Vijayendra on Friday said that he neither shares any personal nor business relationship with Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and dismissed allegations linking him to the Legislative Council election cross-voting.

Addressing reporters after offering prayers at Shri Kshethra Dharmasthala, Vijayendra said the cross-voting had caused immense disappointment to him and the BJP workers.

"The BJP had fielded two senior leaders who had served the party for years. However, cross-voting caused immense disappointment. The cross-voting gave rise to speculations. Hurt by these developments, I had suggested that the legislature party meeting be held at Dharmasthala," he said.

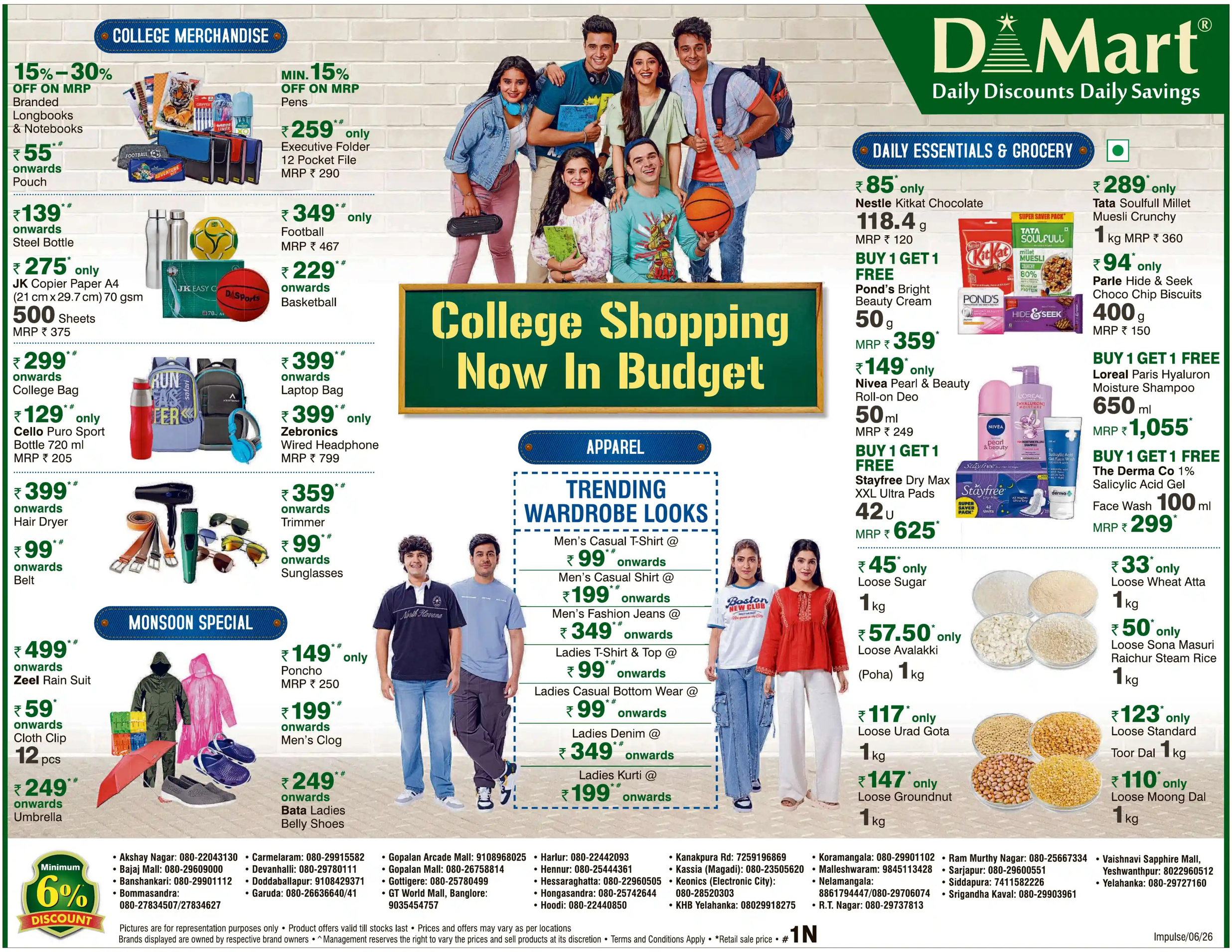
Describing himself as an emotional person, Vijayendra said he had merely expressed his views. "Senior party leaders said that a meeting was not necessary and suggested taking the matter to the high command. Respecting their advice, I came to Dharmasthala to seek the blessings of Lord Manjunatha," he said.

▸ Vijayendra, Page 5

Foreign languages: CBSE gives relief

NEW DELHI, PTI: In a relief to lakhs of CBSE students currently studying in Classes 7 to 9 and who have opted for two foreign languages under the three-language policy, they will be allowed to continue with the same language combination till Class 10, officials said on Friday.

The development comes after the CBSE announced that the study of three languages, including at least two Indian languages, has been made compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1. Several students had approached courts against the CBSE order.
Details on Page 8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Impulse/06/26

TRAINING GAP

Namma city's hidden STP workforce crisis

Bengaluru is the STP capital of India, with the highest number of private STPs. Formal operator training, skilled-worker recognition and automation can help safely manage the thousands of STPs here

SHREE D N
BENGALURU, DHNS

The recent fatal accident at a Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) sewage treatment plant has reignited a long-standing concern. Bengaluru's expanding network of sewage treatment plants continues to rely on inadequately trained manpower, inconsistent safety practices and limited technical oversight. Despite repeated accidents, the sector lacks a sustainable solution to bridge the gap between the growing complexity of STPs and the availability of skilled personnel to operate and maintain them safely.

Senior Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) officials attributed the recent accident at Varthur to negligence by the unit's workers and the contractor's failure to enforce safety protocols. The contract clearly lays out the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) mandating the use of safety equipment, which officials said was not followed.

"It was the responsibility of the contractor to ensure that the workers used all the safety equipment. If the workers who entered the STP during the accident had used the safety harness, they could have been pulled out easily," a senior BWSSB official said.

While the BWSSB does depute an official to oversee the working of the STP, the official cannot look into every single process, the officials said.

"We do not have the manpower to depute more officials. If we did, we would not have to deploy a contractor. STP operations and maintenance require training and expertise in the field, and that is why we chose a company working on it," yet another official said. Officials added that manual interventions are sometimes unavoidable, and the workers are trained to perform them while taking all necessary safety measures.

This brings us to the question: When a government body complains of a lack of manpower and an inability to manage its facility, what could be happening in the 4000+ sewage treatment plants across various apartments in the city?

An STP in Malleswaram where everyday operations have been partially automated. DH PHOTO/SHREE DN

Trained manpower a huge concern

Dr Kamala, a resident of Adarsh Rhythm Apartment in Panduranga Nagar, shares the issues apartments face regarding operations and maintenance.

"The biggest challenge is finding trained personnel. We have only one officially trained operator. The other two have been trained on the job or by private organisations, but they do not possess any formal certification," she explains.

An STP has to run 24x7, and having staff on night shifts is a challenge, she explains. "Even though the odour is much lower after treatment, operators still spend long hours inside the plant environment. Many young workers worry about long-term respiratory problems, making staff retention difficult," she adds.

Vivek S, a part of the LVBL accelerator programme, explained an effort to conduct training for operators. "The idea was to build the capacity of workers involved in STP management and apartment facility operations. We realised that many people working with STPs had never received any formal training. By training them, they could not only improve their own skills but also pass on that knowledge to others."

"We circulated an interest form through apartment property managers and collected the contact details of STP operators. We received encouraging responses initially, and many operators agreed in principle to attend on certain dates."

"However, when it came to final confirmation, most operators said they could not commit to four consecutive weekends. Many would have had to travel more than 10 kilometres to reach the venue, which posed a major constraint. Finalising a suitable venue that was convenient for everyone proved difficult as well. Delays continued, and the trainers became occupied with other projects; the initiative eventually fell dormant," he explains.

Why does this happen? "Operators are already employed and are extremely busy. In most apartment complexes, there are no dedicated STP operators. The same staff members usually handle several facility management responsibilities in addition to operating the STP. That makes it very difficult for them to take time off for training," he explains.

Lingaraj Dinni, director of Again Resource Labs, breaks this into several reinforcing sub-problems. There are some training programmes, but they do not meet reality.

"I think most of them are theoretical training. They don't get enough hands-on experience. Secondly, the training doesn't meet the massive demand for STP operators in Bengaluru. A reasonably sized STP will need six people across three shifts. Multiply that by the number of STPs, and the number is huge. We do not have that many trained members, even if you add up all the training programmes that many organisations have done in Bengaluru. The gap is significant," he explains.

Because of the nature of the STP design, poor ventilation, odour issues and the lack of protective equipment, the operator's job is not sought after. "Nobody wants to work in STPs. The STP is not seen as a very promising or a very good job compared to being an electrician or a plumber. So you don't get good operators. If somebody unskilled just landed in Bengaluru looking for a job, that person becomes the first guy to land this job, unfortunately," he notes.

The operator is only one part of the story. "Most O&M is handled by a single agency — in 90% of cases, the RWA does not directly recruit operators. They go through an agency or a company. The company must ensure that operators are trained, possess the required knowledge, and use appropriate protective equipment. Sometimes they also try to cut costs. If there's a supply gap in trained resources, they'll try to get someone willing to work and put them on the job," Dinni adds.

"Then it becomes just a labour arbitrage thing. You just get some six guys, you pay them 10 to 15K, and you get a margin on top of that. But they don't invest much in training and capacity building, because apartments also don't pay," he explains another side of the problem.

Apartments do not invest enough in STPs because the treated water has nowhere to go, and it becomes an issue to get the consent for operation from the KSPCB renewed without "greasing the palms", explains another source.

Automation: A solution?

Many firms have been trying their hand at automating the STP operations monitoring part. Jeevan Rajan, an entrepreneur who founded EnviRobotics, a firm focused on automation, says that automating STPs is possible. He gives the example of an STP in a commercial office building in Malleshwaram that requires only one housekeeping staff member to keep a manual eye on its operations. "But everything else is monitored through IoT-enabled sensors powered by AI systems and operated remotely," he adds.

When human beings operate the STPs, they tend to skip cumbersome, menial procedures. "They skip the backwash. The pressure goes up, and the filtration rate will be reduced," he explains.

Such lapses lead to equipment failures. "Two or three pumps, motors fail monthly in an STP by default. But here, over the past six months, no equipment failures have occurred. This automation also brings down the operating cost by half," he adds.

"We don't have any operational manpower at all. We get all the data in our command centre. If any problem comes, we send a technician to address it," he adds. One operator can monitor multiple plants from a single screen at the command centre.

The tank-cleaning activity is undertaken manually and outsourced to another firm, he explains. However, efforts are also underway to develop robots that would clean septic tanks.

Dinni says automation of STPs is possible upto a certain extent. "But obviously, the STP design has to be appropriate. The equipment has to be maintained well. And one should be ready to invest in automation. Once these are sorted out, the other things fall in line," he adds.

What does Bengaluru need?

Kamala highlights a major policy issue. "STP operators are still not clearly classified as skilled workers by the government. Electricians and plumbers have recognised skill categories, but STP operators do not. We believe they should be recognised as skilled workers and paid accordingly, although government guidelines on this remain unclear," she adds.

"There should be formal training institutes—perhaps through ITIs or technical colleges—that train and certify STP operators. Certification would improve recruitment standards and professionalise the occupation. We need stronger systems to improve overall STP safety and operations so that no such unfortunate incidents occur again," Kamala adds.

Feedback:
pointblank@deccanherald.co.in

METRO

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Shankar Nag cricket tournament: Organised by Shankar Nag Vinayaka Geleyara Balaga; Ganesha Playground, Kengeri; 7.30 am to 6 pm.

Farmers' Market: Stalls selling fruits, vegetables, and organic produce; GKVK, University of Agricultural Sciences; 7 am to 4 pm.

Walkathon: On the occasion of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Jayanthi; Organised by BDA; Chief Minister DK Shivakumar to take part; S M Krishna Road, Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout, near Challaghatta metro station; 7.15 am.

Report release: 'Index of Responsible Nations'; TV Mohandas Pai, Tejasvi Surya and others to participate; Organised by World Intellectual Foundation; PES University, Banashankari; 10.30 am.

Art exhibition: 'Broken foot journal and other stories'; To commemorate birth anniversary of Reba Hore; Organised by Seagull Kolkata; Karnataka Chitrakala Parishat, Kumarakrupa Road; 11 am.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	30.7°C
Minimum	21.3°C
Rainfall	--
Humidity	85%
Sunset (June 27)	6:49 pm
Sunrise (June 28)	5:56 am
Moonrise	3:54 am
Moonset	2:43 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Labour shortage stalls Ejipura flyover project

BENGALURU, DHNS: Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao on Friday directed the contractor executing the long-delayed Ejipura flyover project to deploy additional manpower and expedite construction. Rao instructed that at least 40 workers be engaged daily for portal frame works to ensure the project is completed within the stipulated timeline.

Rain worsens road rot as city commuters feel the squeeze

Traffic police, GBA flag high-risk spots across all zones

Vehicles moving through a waterlogged road near Jayamahal Palace after heavy rain last week, highlighting persistent urban flooding and drainage issues in the area. DH PHOTO/BK JANARDHAN

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

The recent rains have once again exposed the city's poor road infrastructure.

The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) has joined forces with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) to flag multiple high-risk stretches across the city where potholes, ongoing infrastructure works, and waterlogging are set to worsen already sluggish traffic.

The Deputy Commissioners of Police (Traffic) across the city's zones warned that rain will amplify the current bottlenecks, making peak-hour movement more difficult and increasing the risk of near misses and jams.

DCP Jayaprakash (Traffic, North) said roads leading to Hebbal and Goraguntepalya are particularly vulnerable. "Major congestion is recurring near Manyata Tech Park, Marappanapalya, Honusmaranapalya and Vidyashilpa," he said, adding that poor road surface and stagnant water will make traffic management harder during storms.

In the south, DCP Gopal M Byakod (Traffic) listed Iblur Junction, Ropenagrahara, Bannerghatta Road, Ayyappa underpass and the vicinity of Agara Lake as trouble spots.

> We are coordinating with other agencies during rains and peak hours to ensure free flow. Police 'cobra' units will be deployed to monitor traffic. Underpasses get submerged and cause jams. We have a coordinated approach to keep the traffic moving.
>
> **– DCPS**

"We are coordinating with other agencies during rains and peak hours to ensure free flow. Police 'cobra' units will be deployed to monitor traffic," he said. Traffic officials in the east warned that the Outer Ring Road, Old Airport Road and Old Madras Road face steep challenges, with several sections prone to rapid submergence.

"Underpasses quickly get submerged and cause jams. We have a coordinated approach to keep traffic moving," said DCP Sahil Bagla (Traffic, East). He added that traffic is moving slowly in both directions between Mahadevapura and Marathahalli due to metro station work underway at Kartik Nagar. Traffic police personnel have been instructed to clamp down on unauthorised parking near Marathahalli Bridge junction and surrounding roads to prevent additional congestion.

A senior traffic police officer from the West Division said whenever it rains, waterlogging occurs near the Gaali Anjaneya Swamy Temple road, KR Circle underpass, Nayandahalli Junction, Sumanahalli, Kengeri, and sections of Tumakuru Road and Mysuru Road.

Residents and commuters have long flagged these areas for slow traffic flow and frequent near misses, but problems tend to worsen during evening rush hours and heavy rains. Traffic police are urging motorists to allow extra travel time, avoid stagnant water where possible, follow diversions and heed their instructions during peak hours and rainy days.

Police said they will continue close coordination with civic agencies to expedite patch repairs, clear drains and manage traffic signals, but warned that extensive infrastructure works and bad road surfaces could still cause delays until the work is complete.

15 lakh saplings, citywide events to mark Kempegowda Day today

BENGALURU, DHNS

A citywide plantation drive involving 15 lakh saplings, a mass run, floral tributes at dozens of locations, and the unveiling of a Kempegowda statue will mark Kempegowda Day celebrations here on Saturday.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar is scheduled to inaugurate the celebrations, which will also include the opening of the new Major Arterial Road (MAR) connecting Mysuru Road and Magadi Road. The stretch has been named after former Chief Minister SM Krishna. The highlight of the celebrations will be the launch of the Green Bengaluru initiative, spearheaded by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA).

As part of the campaign, 15 lakh saplings will be planted across three major locations. Residents' Welfare Associations, educational institutions, NGOs and government departments will participate in the drive.

DK Shivakumar

Another major attraction will be the Kempegowda Run, featuring 10-km and 5-km races, which will begin from the Karnataka High Court premises on Saturday morning. The event aims to promote fitness while creating awareness about the legacy of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda.

The Chief Minister is expected to flag off the run before unveiling a statue of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda as part of the 517th birth anniversary celebrations.

The day will begin with floral tributes at Kempegowda statues.

Ministers, MPs, MLAs, bureaucrats and BDA officials have been assigned different locations to pay homage to the city's founder.

CCB nabs rowdy sheeter who dodged court appearances

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Central Crime Branch (CCB) have arrested a rowdy sheeter evading court proceedings despite warrants and a proclamation.

Shakeeb alias Syed Akeeb Pasha, 30, a rowdy sheeter in the Vidyaranyapura police station limits, was held near the Allalasandra flyover in the Yelahanka police station limits. Interrogation revealed 11 criminal cases have been registered against Pasha at police stations in Bengaluru and in other states.

In three of these cases, he had failed to appear before the court on scheduled hearing dates, resulting in proclamation and warrant orders against him. Police produced him before the Soladevanahalli police along with a report for legal action, based on which a case was registered.

Ticketless travel fines fetch KSRTC Rs 9 lakh

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) collected Rs 8.94 lakh in fines during a crackdown on ticketless travel on its buses in Karnataka and neighbouring states in May.

According to the KSRTC, during the month-long operation, enforcement teams checked 42,518 buses, detected 4,353 pilferage cases, penalised 4,476 ticketless passengers and detected Rs 1.52 lakh in pilferage amount, leading to the collection of Rs 8.94 lakh in fines.

The KSRTC has also confirmed that disciplinary proceedings have been initiated against employees found to be involved in or negligent towards such irregularities.

The corporation has urged passengers to cooperate with enforcement efforts by purchasing valid tickets or passes before or during their journeys, warning that repeat violations may attract stricter penalties in future drives.

BDA begins soil testing at Veterinary College campus for short tunnel project

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has begun preparatory work for the construction of a 2.18-km short tunnel road aimed at decongesting Hebbal Junction.

The contractor has started soil testing at the Veterinary College campus, one of the locations along the proposed tunnel alignment.

Workers conduct a geotechnical soil test at the Veterinary College campus for the proposed tunnel road project on Friday. DH PHOTO/BK JANARDHAN

Teams were seen carrying out borehole drilling and geotechnical investigations to assess ground conditions, groundwater levels, and subsurface stability. The survey comes weeks after the BDA awarded contracts for geotechnical investigations for the project.

As reported earlier by *DH*, Rithwik Projects Ltd emerged as the successful bidder for the tunnel project. The tunnel will have entry and exit ramps near Esteem Mall and Baptist Hospital. It will pass beneath the down ramp of the Hebbal flyover and along the edge of Hebbal Lake. The project also includes the construction of a railway underbridge.

Hyderabad-based Rithwik Projects Ltd quoted Rs 1,139.67 crore for the project, which attracted three bidders.

Separately, the BDA is also constructing a Rs 440-crore elevated road at Mehkri Circle, with Aurobindo Realty and Infrastructure awarded the contract.

High bitumen price delays two major roadworks

15% progress in govt-funded road improvement project

BENGALURU, DHNS

Even though the monsoon season has already kicked in, the five newly-carved city corporations have achieved only about 15% of progress in the two major government-funded road improvement works. The poor performance comes even as the condition of roads got worse with motorists demanding asphalting of roads across the city.

While senior officials have set multiple deadlines so far, the delay – mainly caused by shortage of bituminous supply – is unlikely to end soon as contractors continue to wait for the bitumen rate to come down.

Earlier this year, the corporations awarded works amounting to Rs 2,233 crore for the development of both ward roads (known as Chief Minister's Infrastructure Development Programme - CMIDP) and major roads (Special Infrastructure Plan).

The CMIDP programme covers 3,370 roads stretching 749.29 km across Bengaluru and costs an estimated Rs 992 cr. However, only 88.60 km has been completed, translating to an overall physical progress of 14.81%.

Bengaluru West City Corporation, which received the highest allocation, delivered the least progress.

A sum of Rs 1,241.57 crore was set aside for the development of arterial and sub-arterial roads.

The project covers 1,389 roads spanning 1,018 km with an estimated investment of Rs 1,241.57 crore.

So far, only 112.98 km has been completed, resulting in an overall progress of 10.48%. Here, North City Corporation has recorded the slowest progress, completing only 5.28 km while South City Corporation has topped the list.

During the recent review meeting, M Maheshwar Rao, Chief Commissioner of Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) directed the corporation commissioners to complete the work before the rainy days begin.

Combined, the two schemes account for an investment of approximately Rs 2,233.57 crore. They involve: 4,759 roads spread across 1,767.47 km of roads.

The progress report indicates that the government has made significant progress in awarding contracts but the pace of construction has not matched the administrative progress.

An engineer of East Corporation told *DH* that the contractors have sought additional time to procure bitumen as the rates continue to be on the higher side.

"As the war in West Asia has just stopped, we anticipate the price of bitumen to come down in a couple of months. Now, it is somewhere in the range of Rs 76,000 to Rs 85,000 per tonne. In January this year, it was as low as Rs 45,000," he said, hoping the price will come down by 20%.

NIA team quizzes Harihar terror suspect

HARIHAR (DAVANGERE DISTRICT), DHNS: A two-member team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) interrogated Suhail from Uttar Pradesh, who was arrested on charges of having terror links, here on Friday.

Two DySP-rank officers arrived at the Harihar Rural Police Station from Bengaluru and interrogated him from 11.30 am to 5 pm before returning to Bengaluru.

Based on information provided by the terror suspect, who is in the custody of the district police, the NIA intervened and visited the factory where the accused worked. The team also visited the house at Bannikodu village where he stayed for a short period, to gather information.

A thorough examination of Suhail's mobile phone had revealed that he was plotting to perpetrate several acts of terrorism in various parts of the country. He had reportedly made plans to indoctrinate youngsters, whom he then wanted to use for terrorist activities.

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NOTICE FOR HIRING OF CONTRACTORS FOR CGD PROJECT

GAIL Gas Limited, Bengaluru intends to engage experienced contractors/ agencies through an On-the-Spot Walk-In Selection Process for execution of PE Laying Works in Bengaluru (Urban & Rural; 4.01) and Dakshina Kannada (9.28).

The Walk-In Selection Process shall be conducted as per the schedule given below:

Sl. No.	GAs	DPNG LMC/GI Works
1.	Bengaluru (Urban & Rural; 4.01)	30.06.2026, 01.07.2026 & 02.07.2026 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM
2.	Dakshina Kannada (9.28)	

Venue: Conference Room, 3rd Floor, GAIL Gas Limited, SNo 44, No 2, MS Complex, RMV 2 Stage, New BEL Rd, Mathikere, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560054.

Interested bidders are required to submit relevant supporting documents, including but not limited to, Work Experience Certificates/Completion Certificate, Registration Certificate, PAN Card, Start-up certificate (wherever applicable), PF Registration Certificate (wherever applicable), ESI Registration Certificate (wherever applicable, Details of available manpower, machinery, and equipment required for execution of the works.

The bidder shall submit a copy of at least one work order, awarded during the last seven (7) years from the date of bid submission, as proof of experience in carrying out underground utility related works in the gas/ water supply/ drainage/ telecom/ power cables / fiber optic cables (OFC)/ or any other utility sector for GAIL/GAIL Gas and/or their Group Companies, or for any other company.

The Walk-in Selection Process is scheduled to be conducted over the above-mentioned three days. However, the process may be concluded earlier if the required number of eligible vendors are identified and selected before the scheduled closing date.

Detailed Terms & Conditions shall be available at following link: **https://gailgas.com/eoi/expression-interest** Contact Persons

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All corrigendum/addendums to this notice will be hosted on the GAIL Gas website only. Hence, you are requested to visit the website regularly.

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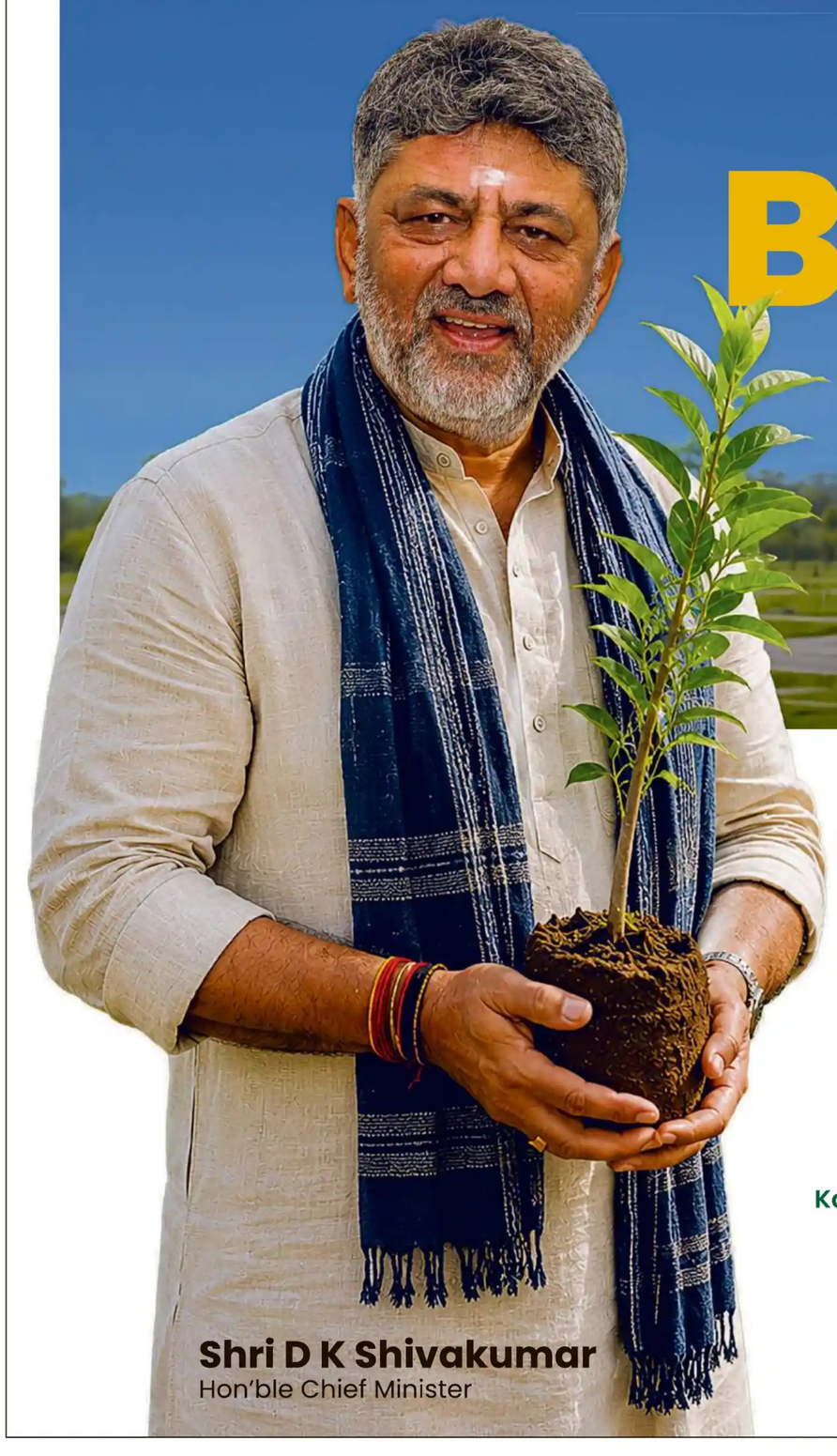
Dr. G. Parameshwara
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister

Shri Krishna Byre Gowda
Hon'ble Bengaluru Development Minister



Shri D K Shivakumar
Hon'ble Chief Minister

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Bengaluru Plants History

Saturday, 27 June 2026
From 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM

15 Lakh Native plant saplings | **50,000** Citizens & Volunteers

Coordinated by
Bangalore Development Authority

In association with
5 City Corporations of Greater Bengaluru Authority
Karnataka Building And Other Construction Workers Welfare Board
Department of Higher Education
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BDA Chairman **Shri N.A. Haris** planting a sapling as part of the **Bengaluru Urban Ecological Restoration Mission 2026–2030**

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Almost every locality in Bengaluru has a street corner or vacant plot that has turned into an informal garbage dump. These black spots are not merely an eyesore; they are a threat to public health and the environment. Deccan Herald and Prajavani invite citizens to share details and photographs of such sites for publication in these columns, in order to help push for timely action from the authorities.

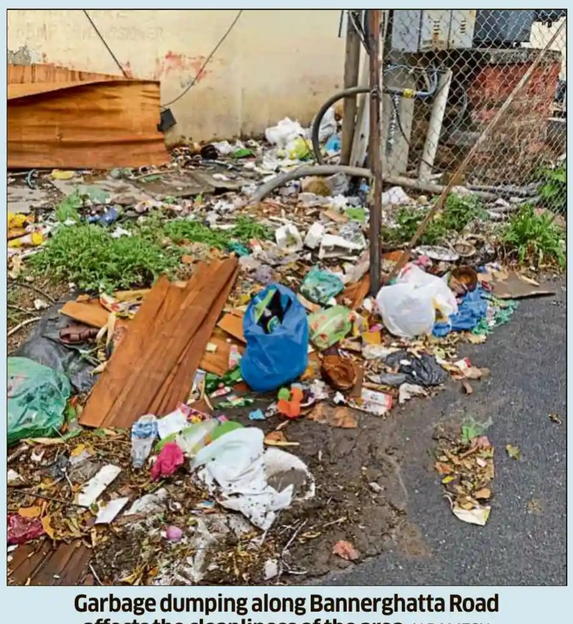
Garbage piles and liquor bottles remain unattended on the Hennur flyover, despite repeated complaints to the GBA. MUNIRAJU, HENNUR

Repeated garbage dumping on 3rd Cross, Nandini Layout, continues to trouble residents despite ongoing complaints. RADHIKA DV, NANDINI LAYOUT

A garbage hotspot at 1st Main, Bikasipura, Subramanyapura. The image highlights a civic concern that needs attention from local authorities, and stricter enforcement against open dumping of waste. A RESIDENT

Uncleared garbage near Rajeshwari Layout, Ramamurthy Nagar, is an eyesore and a source of unhygienic conditions. A RESIDENT

Cattle feeding on garbage mounds highlights improper waste disposal at Kathriguppe, Banashankari 3rd Stage, near SLV steel factory. A RESIDENT



Garbage dumping along Bannerghatta Road affects the cleanliness of the area. N RAMESH

KR Puram triple murder: Co-accused held after 4-day manhunt

Whitefield police, with help from Puducherry cops, arrested him

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Whitefield sub-division police on Friday arrested 26-year-old software engineer Kenneth, the co-accused in the KR Puram triple murder case, ending a four-day manhunt across Karnataka and Puducherry.

He was caught late Thursday night in Puducherry with assistance from the local police.

Kenneth had been on the run since the murders on June 22, frequently changing locations and reportedly taking shelter in beachside accommodations to avoid detection.

Kenneth

Shwetha

The breakthrough came after the Bengaluru police circulated his photographs to all police stations in Puducherry following the arrest of prime accused Shwetha.

Acting on a tip-off, ASI Ramalingam of Orleanpet police station in Puducherry spotted Kenneth near a bar around 11.30 pm. When he attempted to flee through a crowded locality, the officer chased and overpowered him before alerting the special teams in Bengaluru.

Police said coordination between the Bengaluru and Puducherry forces was key to tracking him down. Ten special teams had been deployed after the case was registered, focusing on CCTV analysis, technical surveillance, and border movement tracking.

Investigators said Kenneth and Shwetha fled together on a motorcycle after the murders before splitting up.

While Shwetha was arrested on June 24 near the Puducherry railway station, Kenneth managed to evade capture for two more days by avoiding CCTV zones, switching routes frequently and staying off digital payments and mobile phones.

Investigators said Kenneth appeared to have a strong understanding of police tracking methods and how digital trails are typically traced.

Kenneth was brought to Bengaluru and produced before a magistrate, who granted police custody for further interrogation.

Police are now questioning both accused to establish the sequence of events and their respective roles in the crime.

Case details

The case came to light after Somasundar (52), a software engineer, his wife Muthulakshmi (48), and their younger daughter Supriya (19), a degree student, were found murdered in their rented flat at Sai Gardens apartment in Seegehalli, KR Puram on Monday.

Shwetha and live-in partner Kenneth murdered her parents and younger sister as they opposed their relationship.

TIMELINE

June 22: Triple murder reported; police launch investigation and form special teams.

June 23: Accused flee Bengaluru; intensive tracking begins.

June 24: Shwetha arrested near Puducherry railway station.

June 25: Kenneth arrested in Puducherry after chase by ASI Ramalingam; brought to Bengaluru for custody.

Five children fall out of moving school van after rear door opens

Incident renews concerns over school transport safety

BENGALURU, DHNS

Five schoolchildren had a narrow escape after they fell out of a moving school van when its rear door suddenly swung open in Gayathri Layout near KR Puram on Thursday.

According to the police, the van was carrying schoolchildren when its rear door reportedly opened as the vehicle negotiated a road hump, throwing five children seated near the back onto the road.

Fortunately, no vehicle was travelling immediately behind the van, averting what could have been a major tragedy.

The children sustained minor injuries and were rescued by local residents.

The KR Puram Traffic Police have registered a case against the van driver for negligent driving and seized the vehicle.

Police said the van was carrying 10 students at the time of the incident.

However, they suspect the actual number may have been higher, with some children possibly having been dropped off before the accident.

CCTV footage from Gayathri Layout near KR Puram shows five schoolchildren falling onto the road after the rear door of a moving school van unexpectedly opened.

Investigators suspect the rear door was either not properly secured or that the vehicle suffered a mechanical defect, causing it to open while the van was in motion.

The incident has raised concerns over the maintenance and safety of private school transport vehicles.

Fortunately, no vehicle was immediately behind the van, preventing what could have been a major tragedy. Authorities also suspect the actual number of children involved may have been higher, as some may have been dropped off before the accident

Parents concerned

Residents and parents have urged the authorities to conduct regular inspections of school vans and autorickshaws used to ferry students, and to ensure they comply with mandatory safety standards and audits.

Metro worker electrocuted near Trinity

BENGALURU, DHNS: A contract labourer engaged in Namma Metro pillar lighting works died after suffering an electric shock while carrying out excavation work near the Trinity metro station on Thursday afternoon.

According to the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), the accident occurred around 3.52 pm near Pillar No 153 outside the Trinity station.

The deceased was employed by M R Electricals, the contractor executing pillar lighting works for the metro project.

BMRCL said the labourer came into contact with an electrical source while excavating an earth pit, resulting in an electric shock.

The worker was rushed to the emergency ward of St Philomena's Hospital. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival.

The exact cause of the incident is yet to be established. The BMRCL said the circumstances leading to the electrocution are under investigation by the authorities concerned, and further details will be shared once the inquiry is completed.

Tree branch falls on biker in Rajajinagar; critically injured

BENGALURU, DHNS

A 53-year-old employee of a private finance company sustained critical head injuries after a dried tree branch snapped and fell on him while he was riding his motorcycle near Ram Mandir Road in Rajajinagar on Wednesday evening.

According to the police, the victim, identified as Suresh, was on his way to collect loan repayments as part of his field duties for a private finance company in Malleswaram. The incident occurred around 5 pm.

CCTV footage of the incident shows Suresh riding along the road without wearing a helmet when a large dried branch suddenly broke off from a roadside tree and struck him on the head. The impact caused him to lose control of the motorcycle and crash onto the road, leaving him unconscious with severe head injuries.

Bystanders rushed to his aid and shifted him to a nearby hospital in Rajajinagar, where he is undergoing treatment.

Police said a non-cognisable report (NCR) has been registered at the Rajajinagar police station, and a preliminary enquiry is underway. Officials from the GBA Forest Department also visited the accident spot following the incident.

A CCTV grab captures the moment the falling tree branch strikes the biker in Rajajinagar, causing him to lose control and crash.

Local residents alleged that they had repeatedly complained to the Forest Department about several dried and hazardous tree branches in the area, but claimed that no preventive action had been taken. They accused the authorities of negligence and said the accident could have been avoided had the dangerous branches been pruned in time.

"The city has many such dried trees that pose a serious threat to motorists and pedestrians. Authorities should identify and remove hazardous branches before more families suffer," a resident said.

Residents blame official negligence

Local residents claim they repeatedly warned the Forest Department about hazardous, dried tree branches in the area, but no action was taken. Expressing outrage, they said the accident was entirely preventable had authorities pruned the dangerous branches in time.

Chain jammed metro door, disrupted Purple Line: BMRCL

BENGALURU, DHNS: A metal chain carried by a commuter got lodged in the door guideway of a metro train at the Cubbon Park station, preventing the doors from closing properly and causing a brief disruption to Purple Line services on Thursday evening, according to the preliminary findings of an investigation by the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL).

The incident disrupted train services from 7.36 pm to 7.54 pm after the train was unable to proceed because of the door malfunction, officials said.

According to the BMRCL, investigations by its Operations and Maintenance teams found that the chain had become trapped in the train door guideway, preventing the doors from closing completely.

The chain that was found.

A detailed inspection of the train and its door systems found no technical fault with the equipment.

"The BMRCL places the highest priority on passenger safety. All necessary safety protocols were followed before the train was cleared for service," the statement said.

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Fake documents used to register 3 sites; FIR filed

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Mahadevapura police have registered a case against three persons, including a woman, for allegedly creating and using forged property documents to fraudulently register three sites in Bhattarahalli village at the Mahadevapura sub-registrar's office.

The accused have been identified as Manjamma, V Ramesh, and V Narayanaswamy, all residents of KR Puram.

A senior police officer said the case was registered based on a complaint filed by the sub-registrar, Mahadevapura, following a report from the District Registrar, Shivajinagar.

According to the complaint, the accused executed and registered three sale deeds on April 18, 2024, pertaining to sites carved out of Survey No 57/2, Khata No 81, in Bhattarahalli village.

During subsequent verification, the Assistant Revenue Officer of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) found that the khata documents submitted at the time of registration were not genuine and had not been issued by the competent authority.

Based on the report and verification of official records, authorities concluded that forged documents had been produced before the then sub-registrar to secure registration of sale deeds of private land.

One Yatish Kumar had also lodged a complaint with GBA authorities regarding the alleged fraud.

Following the findings, the sub-registrar lodged a complaint seeking legal action against the accused, who have been booked under charges of cheating and dishonestly, inducing delivery of property, forgery of documents or electronic records, as well as Sections 82 and 83 of the Registration Act, 1908.

The accused are yet to be traced.

South Corpn plans auto tippers for evening waste collection

BENGALURU, DHNS: To reduce black spots and improve solid waste management in and around Yelachenahalli, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao on Friday directed officials to identify garbage-prone areas and consider deploying auto tippers during evening hours as well to ensure timely waste collection.

He also suggested deploying additional vehicles at locations where required.

Rao also appealed to residents to cooperate with the civic body by reporting instances of garbage accumulation or delays in waste collection.

"Citizens must work in partnership with the corporation to effectively address waste management issues. Upon receiving such information, corporation staff will immediately visit the location and resolve the issue," he said.

Transfer station

Rao also directed officials to construct a transfer station in the area on a priority basis.

East Corpn picks ORR, Old Madras Road, Sarjapur Road for footpath clearance drive

BENGALURU, DHNS: Major arterial roads, including Outer Ring Road, Old Madras Road, ITPL Main Road, Sarjapur Main Road and Whitefield Main Road, have been identified for the first phase of a footpath encroachment clearance drive, which will begin on July 1 across the Bengaluru East City Corporation limits.

On Friday, the corporation commissioner held a detailed meeting following instructions from Greater Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda to ensure footpaths are safe and free of obstructions for pedestrians. Other roads identified for the first phase in the Bengaluru East City Corporation include Hoodi–Ayyappanagar Main Road, Horamavu–K Narayanapura Road, AECS Main Road and roads within the EPIP area. However, stretches such as Ramamurthy Nagar Main Road, TC Palya Main Road and Babusapalya Road have not been included in the first phase.

Chairing a review meeting with engineering officials on Friday, Corporation Commissioner DS Ramesh directed officials to prepare an action plan to remove all unauthorised encroachments such as roadside kiosks, temporary sheds, pushcarts, canopies and other structures.

The commissioner also ordered the formation of special teams headed by designated nodal officers. The teams will comprise assistant executive engineers, assistant engineers, health inspectors, pourakarmikas, marshals, and tractor and silt removal units, supported by required machinery and equipment.

The meeting was attended by Additional Commissioner (Development) Lokhande Snehal Sudhakar, Chief Engineers M Lokesh and Krishnamurthy, executive engineers, assistant executive engineers, assistant engineers and other officials.

Township debate: HDK to wait for CM at Byramangala today

BENGALURU, DHNS: Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy on Friday reiterated that he will visit Byramangala on Saturday and wait for the Chief Minister D K Shivakumar to discuss about the Bidadi Township project.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "I will be present at Byramangala on June 27, hoping the chief minister will join me there to directly address the fears farmers have been facing over the proposed Bidadi township project."

"Any real, meaningful discussion should happen right on the ground at Byramangala, sitting alongside the affected farmers and locals," he said.

Kumaraswamy mentioned he would stay at Byramangala till Saturday afternoon, hoping for a positive response from the CM.

"We aren't going there to create drama. We are just standing in solidarity with our farmers who are deeply worried about this project. I am keeping my promise to the public. If the CM also shows up, we can actually sort things out constructively," he added.

Reacting to reports that some farmers are ready to give up their lands, Kumaraswamy clarified that he has no personal agenda and won't interfere if the consent is genuine. "If farmers are happily parting with their land on their own, I have no issue. But if there is any pressure or threat to force them, we will not tolerate it," he said.

Slamming reports that Section 144 (prohibitory orders) could be clamped in the area, Kumaraswamy reiterated that neither he nor the farmers have any plans to disrupt law and order. He maintained that while a few farmers might be okay with parting with their land, a massive number of them are against it and know exactly what they stand to lose.

KIA sees three wildlife smuggling cases in three months

Permanent team of Forest dept deployed at airport

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

In the last three months, Kempegowda International Airport(KIA) saw three cases of wildlife smuggling - all from Bangkok, Thailand.

In comparison, during the same period last year, between April and June 2025, the airport witnessed six cases of wildlife smuggling.

"So far, in June, we have not had any case of wildlife smuggling. We have noticed that wildlife smuggling cases have slowed down in the past few months. Especially since we partnered with the Karnataka Forest Department earlier this year in January to deploy a permanent team of forest officials to work alongside Customs at the Bengaluru airport," a senior customs official told *DH*, adding that in addition to heightened vigilance, the team was also investigating wildlife smuggling rackets in and around the city.

In 2025-26, the airport saw 20 wildlife import cases in total, a majority from Thailand.

"Sometimes, even though the handlers land from other southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, after investigation, we have been able to track their origin destination to Thailand. Earlier this year, we also held a meeting with the Thai Consul General to highlight our concerns about the increasing number of wildlife and narcotics smuggling cases from Thailand," he added.

One of the Blue Iguanas siezed in April.
PHOTOS: CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT

Green tree phytons seized as a part of a larger consignment in April.

A Goeldi's marmoset is a small monkey found predominantly in the South American continent.

Among the three cases this financial year, the largest consignment was seized on April 23. The accused, a 41-year-old woman from Tumakuru, was caught carrying huge quantities of 20 different species, mostly reptiles. The consignment included six ball pythons, 20 Ouachita map turtles, 51 blue iguanas, 45 red-eared slider turtles, and seven American five-lined skinks, among other species. Overall, the seizure included about 360 wild animals, one of which was found dead.

"In comparison to some of the seizures we've done in recent years, this is not a big one. There have been instances where we have seized over 3,000 turtles in one instance. The handlers don't bother concealing these animals. Since these are small animals, they just carry them in their checked-in baggage," added the official.

The second smuggling attempt was carried out by a 20-year-old man from JP Nagar on May 15. This consignment included six Argentine black-and-white tegus, 18 African spurred tortoises, two Goeldi's marmosets, 10 red-footed tortoises, one yellow-cheeked gibbon, and 10 Indonesian blue-tongued skinks.

The latest seizure was carried out on May 28 — involving a Canary winged parakeet (dead), 2 Senegal parrots, and 4 Albino tree shrews.

The illegally imported wildlife is immediately returned to the country of origin once a case is booked against the accused under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. In the past three months, the airport has seen no cases of illegal wildlife export.

Farmers won't be forced to part with lands: DCM

BENGALURU, DHNS: Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara on Friday reiterated that farmers would not be forced part with their their lands for the proposed AI City project in Bidadi.

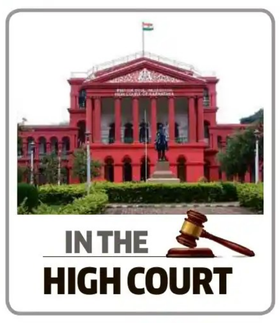
Speaking to reporters, he said: "As I have already stated, we will not forcefully take lands from the farmers. There is no meaning in building a township by forcing farmers out. The chief minister has already instructed that lands should be acquired with farmers' permission to build the township. If they feel the compensation paid is not adequate, there are chances of increasing that also in the future. All in all, we want to make Bidadi township without any problems."

When asked about the need for AI hubs to have sufficient water resources, Parameshwara clarified that the primary objective of the Bidadi project was not AI, but to decongest and reduce the pressure on Bengaluru.

"At the time of the NICE Project, there was a proposal to make seven townships. The idea was to reduce the pressure on Bengaluru. The objective is to reduce the pressure on Bengaluru by developing nearby places like Kolar, Tumakuru and Ramanagara. For these reasons, the Bidadi township may improve things a bit," he added.

Second wife eligible to get compensation in accident case: HC

BENGALURU, DHNS



The High Court of Karnataka has said that a second wife and the children born to her are also eligible to receive compensation in an accident case, noting that the expression "legal representative" under the Motor Vehicles Act, a beneficial legislation, is of wide import and is not confined to the legal heirs alone.

A division bench comprising Justices Jayant Banerji and Tara Vitasta Ganju said this while awarding an additional Rs 15.02 lakh compensation with 9 % interest to the legal representatives of a flower grower from Nandigavi village in Harihar taluk of Davangere district.

The accident occurred on March 9, 2019, when Pandurangappa, a flower grower, was riding pillion on a motorcycle from Nandigavi to Meleri village.

A car collided head on with the motorcycle while trying to overtake another car. Pandurangappa succumbed to serious injuries.

Pandurangappa's mother Mahanthamma and his wife Asha moved the accident tribunal. His second wife Geetha and their minor daughter were impleaded as respondents. In November 2020, the tribunal awarded Rs 15.1 lakh compensation along with 9% interest. Regarding the second wife and the minor daughter, the tribunal observed that it cannot adjudicate on the jural relationship since it is not a competent court for the same. The tribunal did not apportion the compensation amount.

In the appeal proceedings initiated by Asha and her mother-in-law, the division bench noted that the second wife and her daughter are also eligible to receive compensation.

The bench cited the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation vs Ramanbhai Prabhatbhai case wherein the Apex Court held that a legal representative need not necessarily be confined to the wife, husband, parent and child of deceased. The top court further held that every person who represents the estate of deceased and suffers on account of death of a person in a motor vehicle accident should have a remedy for realisation of compensation.

In terms of the chart prepared by Karnataka State Legal Services Authority, the division bench considered the notional income for 2019 at Rs 14,000 per month and held that claimants are entitled to additional Rs 15.02 lakh compensation over and above the amount already awarded by the tribunal.

Phone prices spike as chip crunch bites

Phone, From Page 1

Going forward, all segments (ranging from Rs15,000 to Rs1 lakh plus) will shrink by the end of 2026, as rising retail prices may force customers to wait longer before upgrading their existing handsets.

"Thursday's MacBook and iPad price increases show us the real story: memory costs are rising across Apple's entire ecosystem, and that wave is hitting smartphones next. iPhone base prices haven't moved yet, not on current models, but the evidence is clear. We expect this pricing pressure to persist through at least early 2028, with a larger impact landing in the September launch window for the iPhone 18 Pro and Pro Max in Sep'26. IDC now projects iPhone shipments will either remain flat or decline slightly versus 2025's 14 million units," said Upasana Joshi, senior research manager, Devices Research, IDC Asia/Pacific.

Joshi noted that this isn't a temporary supply issue. Memory costs tied to AI data centre expansion will remain elevated through 2027.

EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL
BAJJANAHALLI, TQ-KORATAGERE, DIST-TUMAKURU

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

Eligible Candidates are invited to appear for a walk-in-interview for contractual/Guest appointment for the posts of PGT-Kannada, TGT – Kannada, English, Computer Science, PET Male, PET Female, Part time Doctor, Counsellor, Hostel warden (Female) and Female staff Nurse in EMRS Bajjanahalli. Candidates must bring their biodata, original certificates, Experience certificates, one set of photocopies of all certificates, and two photographs at the time of walk-in-interview.

Essential Qualification: As per EMRS Recruitment Rules NESTS. (Available on website) **www.emrsbajjanahalli.in**

This is a temporary engagement until the requirements.

Venue and Date & Time:
EMRS Bajjanahalli, 06/07/2026 at 10.00 A.M

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION (ISRO)

ISRO TELEMETRY TRACKING AND COMMAND NETWORK BENGALURU

Advt. No. ISTRAC:02:2026 **Date 27.06.2026**

ISRO Telemetry Tracking & Command Network Bengaluru, Invites on-line applications for the following posts (Liable to be posted anywhere in India), the posts are temporary, but likely to continue.

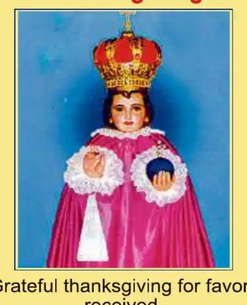
Sl. No	Name of Post Tech	No. of Vacancies
1.	Tecnician-B (Electronics Mechanic)	08
2.	Technician-B (Carpenter)	01
3	Draughtsman-B (Civil)	01
4	Draughtsman-B (Mechanical)	01
5	Technical Assistant (Electronics)	06
6	Technical Assistant (Mechanical)	01
7	Scientific Assistant (Computer Science)	04
8	Scientific Assistant (Mathematics)	01
9	Library Assistant -A	01
10	Cook -A	02

For detailed advisement and to apply Online please visit **www.isro.gov.in / www.istrac.gov.in**

Opening Date for On-line Registration:	**27.06.2026 (10:00 AM)**
Closing Date for On-line Registration:	**20.07.2026 (11-55 PM)**

CBC 49124/11/0002/2627

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving

Grateful thanksgiving for favors received.
- B Family

THANKSGIVING
Book your Thanksgiving Advertisement in
DH Deccan Herald
@ 2100 with GST
(Size 4cmx5cm)
For more Details Contact:
Ph: 080- 45557163/ 164
9845114560 | 9731810277

CORRIGENDUM NO. 02 AGAINST TENDER NOTICE NO. CON/2026/APR/04 DATED: 30-04-2026

Corrigendum- 02 for **Tender No. CE-CON-FT-EPC-2026-05** has been published. For details please visit **www.ireps.gov.in**
Chief Engineer/CON/Lumding Project, Maligaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
(Construction Organisation)
Serving Customers With A Smile

EASTERN RAILWAY

Abridged Tender Notice No. ASN/I/01 of 2026-27 for E-Tendering, dated: 25.06.2026. Tender notice for e-tendering is invited by Dy. Chief Engineer/Con/I/ Eastern Railway, Asansol Division, Station Road, Asansol, Pin-713301 for the following work:- **Name of work:** Balance work of Geo-technical Investigation and all other ancillary works under the jurisdiction of Dy. CE/Con-1/Eastern Railway/Asansol. **Mode of Tender:** Single packet system. **Approx Value:** Rs. 93.02 Lakhs. **Cost of Tender document:** Nil. **Bid Security:** Rs. 1,86,100/-. **Completion period:** 12 Months. **Tender closing date and time:** 17.07.2026 at 11.00 hrs. Tender document and other details can be obtained from the website **www.ireps.gov.in.** The bidding for the tender is to be submitted through e-tendering on above website. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any manual offer if received shall not be accepted and will be summarily rejected.
ASN-153/2026-27
Tender Notices are also available at Website www.er.indianrailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRailwayindia Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
Expression of Interest (EOI) for Engagement of Professional Housekeeping Agencies for Better On Board Housekeeping Services (OBHS) in Coaching Trains over South Central Railway.
PUBL408

On behalf of President of India, PCME/SCR Invites EOI to empanel competent and experienced agencies for providing enhanced and high-quality On-Board Housekeeping Services as per the policy guidelines on "Reforms for Better On-Board Services" and Evaluation Criteria for empanelment of agencies, issued by Railway Board.

- **EOI offer and required documents can be downloaded from the website htpp://scr.indianrailways.gov.in**
- **EOI shall be submitted in sealed envelope, using prescribed format, along with complete details of technical offer and relevant documents. The EOI proposals shall be submitted in the Box available in Dy.CEnHM/SCR, Room No. 105, First Floor, Mechanical Department, South Central Railway, Headquarters Office, Rail Nilayam, Secunderabad-500003.**
- **Date & Time of EOI documents submission: Within 15 days of issue of this notification.**

A478 **Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer, Secunderabad**

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
SALEM DIVISION
E-TENDER NOTICE No. SA-E6-2026-27-W1-W3, Dated: 19.06.2026
Divisional Railway Manager / Electrical / Salem Division, Salem - 5 for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tender for the under mentioned works. Online bids only will be accepted. For detailed NIT, qualification criteria, bidding document, tender submission etc., can be viewed / downloaded from website portal **www.ireps.gov.in**

E-Tender Notice No, Date and Name of Work	Details
1) SA-E6-2026-27-W1 Dated: 19.06.2026 Salem Division: Construction of New Terminal building at Erode Railway Station - Electrical arrangements	**Approx. Cost - ₹ 1,35,35,111.00/- EMD - ₹ 2,70,700.00/- Completion Period - 36 Months**
2) SA-E6-2026-27-W2 Dated: 19.06.2026 Salem Division: Replacement of Defective LTUG Cable feeding important loads over SSE / Electrical / Erode Section	**Approx. Cost - ₹ 7000014.00/- EMD - ₹ 1,40,000.00/- Completion Period - 36 Months**
3) SA-E6-2026-27-W3 Dated: 19.06.2026 Provision of Power Supply Arrangements for Three Escalators at Coimbatore North Jn (CBF-NSG6) and three Escalators at Podanur Jn (PTJ-NSG4) - Electrical Arrangements.	**Approx. Cost - ₹ 34,40,351.00/- EMD - ₹ 68,800.00/- Completion Period - 12 Months**
For all the works Closing Time & Date	**15.00 hrs. on 20.07.2026**
For all the works Bids Opening Time & Date	**15.30 hrs. on 20.07.2026**

All Addendum / Corrigendum, Time extension, Clarifications, etc. will be uploaded in the website portal **www.ireps.gov.in** only and will not be published separately in Newspapers. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updated.
Divisional Railway Manager (Electrical) / Salem - 636005

EASTERN RAILWAY

Following E-tender is invited online by the Sr. Divisional Engineer/C/Howrah, Eastern Railway, Howrah Division, New DRM Building, 4th Floor, Near Rail Museum, Howrah-711101 from Tenderers having experience of similar nature of work and required Financial capabilities including those Registered with Irrigation/CPWD/SEB/MES or any public sector undertaking for the following work:- Under Sr. DEN/HQ/ Howrah. **Sl. No. 1, E-Tender No. 149_2026-27. Description of work:** P.Way Maintenance work at Howrah Passenger and Non-Passenger Yard in the jurisdiction of SSE(P.Way)Howrah under AEN/Track/Howrah. (In between Jurisdiction Howrah - Bally Main - UP, DN & REV (0/0-2/0), Howrah - Bally, Howrah-Barddhaman Chord-UP Howrah-Barddhaman Chord & DN Howrah-Barddhaman Chord (0/0-2/0), Howrah-Santragachi - UP, DN & DN2 -(0/0-1/0), Howrah Platform Line-1 to 24, Jheel siding Yard, Tikiapara Yard, Howrah Goods Yard & Howrah Goods Flyover). **Approx Cost:** Rs. 1,50,42,823.15. **Earnest Money:** Rs.3,00,900/-. **Completion Period:** 12 (Twelve) months from the date of issue of acceptance letter. **Sl. No. 2, E-Tender No. 150_ 2026-27. Description of work:** Provision for replacement of damage roof sheet including vallyey gutter, ridge at Sorting Yard Coaching Depot maintenance shed & Sorting Yard Sickline shed in the section of SSE/W/Bamangachhi under AEN/2/Howrah. **Approx Cost:** Rs. 2,33,13,373.29. **Earnest Money:** Rs.4,66,300/- **Completion Period:** 06 (Six) months from the date of issue of acceptance letter. **Sl. No. 3, E-Tender No. 151_2026-27. Description of work:** Augmentation of facilities in Diesel Sheds for homing of Electric Locomotives. (Phase-II). **Approx Cost:** Rs. 2,34,07,434.64. **Earnest Money:** Rs.4,68,200/-. **Completion Period:** 12 (Twelve) months from the date of issue of acceptance letter. **Cost of Tender Form:** Rs. 0.00 [For Sl. No. 1, 2 & 3]. In case the date of closing mentioned in the Notice Inviting Tender is declared a holiday/bandh/ strike on any account, the date of closing tender online will not be changed as the application in the website of IREPS does not permit submission of any offer after closing date and time of the tender. However, opening of tenders online will be done next working day. **Closing date and time of Tender:** 17.07.2026 at 14.00 hrs. The details of tender are available at website **www.ireps.gov.in**. Tenderers are requested to submit their offer online on the above website. Payment of EMD & TDC - Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Tender document cost in respect of E-tendering, should be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. **NOTE:** Fixed Deposit Receipt (FDR) will not be accepted as EMD for tenders invited on IREPS (e-tender portal). No manual offer will be accepted.
HWH-177/2026-27
Tender Notices are also available at websites : www.er.indianrailways.gov.in/www.ireps.gov.in
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Federation of CCS NIAM (IEF of CCS NIAM)
Regd. Office: C/O CCS NIAM, Kota Road, Bambala, Jaipur, Rajasthan
(Agri Business Incubator under RKVY Innovation and Agri-entrepreneurship Programme, MoA&FW, GoI)

Call for Applications from Indian Agri startups & Agri Innovators for Cohort-14 under PM-RKVY

Student Orientation Programme	Agripreneurship Orientation Programme (Idea to prototype)	Startup Agri- Business incubation Programme (Prototype to MVP)
I. One Month Online / Residential Training **II. Grant-in-aid upto Rs. 4 Lakhs**	I. One Month Online / Residential training **II. Grant-in-aid upto Rs. 5 Lakhs**	i. One Month Online / Residential training **ii. Grant-in-aid upto Rs. 25 Lakhs**

Last date for application: 31th July 2026
For more details visit: www.niam-nabi.com
E-mail: nabi@ccsniam.ac.in Mob. +91 80586 82323 / 90369 16907
CBC 01375/11/0003/2627

No.L-19013/17/2022-AS
Government of India
Ministry of Ayush (Ayurveda Section)

Advertisement for the post of Director General (DG), Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), New Delhi

Applications are invited (in duplicate) from eligible candidates for filling up the post of Director General (DG), Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), New Delhi, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. Details in this regard are available on the website of the Ministry **(www.ayush.gov.in)** and Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), New Delhi **(https://ccras.nic.in).**

2. Application complete in all respect in the prescribed proforma may be submitted through proper channel to the undersigned in the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, Ayush Bhawan, B-Block, GPO Complex, INA, New Delhi-110023 within 30 days from the date of publication of the advertisement for the post in the Employment News/Rozgar Samachar.

Under Secretary to the Government of India

CBC 17216/11/0006/2627

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large that our client ("**Client**") proposes to acquire securities in **M/s. TRIL Constructions Limited ("Company")** (CIN: U45201MH2007PLC 171985), a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956, having its registered office at Office no. 4/5, 1st Floor, Plot-11/13, Botawala Building, Horniman Circle, Fort, Mumbai-400001.

The said company is the owner, and in possession of land bearing **Municipal no. 2, MES Road, Jalahalli, Ward no. 1, HMT, (PID no. 1-56 -2) (earlier being Survey No. 11 measuring 12 Acres 39 Guntas / 5,65,191 Sq Ft with no Kharab, situated at Taneeranahalli Village, Yeshwanthapura Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, Bangalore Urban District** acquired under Sale Deed dated 11.07.2013 registered as document no. RJN-1-01969-2013-14 stored in CD no. RJND254 at the Office of Sub Registrar Rajajinagara. The company does not own any other immoveable property.

All persons having or claiming any right, title, interest, or claim whatsoever in respect of the said company, its business, its securities, management and operations, and/or the aforesaid immovable property, whether by way of subscription, sale or purchase, gift, inheritance, transmission, mortgage, charge, lien, trust, possession, easement, attachment, or otherwise, are hereby requested to make the same known in writing, together with all supporting documents, to the undersigned at the address given below within 10 (TEN) days from the date of publication of this notice.

If no such claim is received within the stipulated time, the proposed transaction shall be completed without any reference to such claims, and any such claims, if any, shall be deemed to have been waived and shall not be entertained thereafter.

Place: Bangalore, Date: 27.06.2026

FoxMandal Solicitors & Advocates

Mr. S T Prashantha Kumar, Advocate & Senior Partner
Mr. Mali Pavan Gowda, Advocate & G-Head
Fox Mandal & Associates, Solicitors & Advocates,
FM House, 6/12, Primrose Road, Bangalore – 560025, Karnataka, India
Phone: +91 80 2559 5911. e-mail : prashantha.kumar@foxmandal.in

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar chairs a review meeting of the Excise Department in Bengaluru on Friday.

CM warns excise officers against corruption

'Won't tolerate anyone who brings bad name to govt'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday rebuked excise officials and said he would consider a new law to shunt them to other departments if they tarnish the government's image.

Shivakumar's crackdown came a day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said it found huge corruption - "an organised syndicate" - in the Excise Department, where it claimed most officials owned benami liquor licences.

"If you function with dignity, the government's dignity is enhanced. If you do anything that damages the government's dignity, we will not sit idle and watch," Shivakumar said during a review meeting of the department.

"Don't assume that the staff and officials of the Excise Department cannot be transferred to another department. If needed, there are also opportunities to bring about the legal changes necessary to carry out transfers. I am giving you clear instructions to work with great caution," Shivakumar said.

"I will not tolerate anyone, or any attempt, that brings a bad name to the government," he added.

"I have seen reports on how the department is functioning in neighbouring states. We must strive to reach the target set for the department. If you work with dignity, the department's dignity is preserved. If the department's dignity is preserved, the government's dignity is enhanced. Display the professionalism that lifts the government's dignity. Otherwise, strict action becomes unavoidable," Shivakumar told the officers.

574 liquor licences to go under hammer

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar has approved the auction of 574 defunct liquor licences. Earlier, the auction was slated to start in January this year. However, it was stayed by the court.

Following a legal reprieve, the government has decided to go ahead with the process. CL-2 (retail liquor shop) and CL-9 (bar & restaurant) licences will go under the hammer. Two new categories will be created for the auctioned licences: CL(2-A) and CL(9-A).

The government earlier fixed the base price for each permit at Rs 1.5 crore in Bengaluru. During the review meeting, Shivakumar asked officials to allow liquor licence owners to pay the renewal amount in two instalments.

Don't trouble honest taxpayers, CM tells commercial tax officers

Up to May, GST collection in state rose by 9% to Rs 32.06K cr

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka has registered the second highest growth rate in GST revenues after Telangana with Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday asking officials to improve collections while ensuring honest taxpayers are not harassed.

Up to May this fiscal, Karnataka has collected GST revenues of Rs 32,069 crore, registering a 9% growth rate, which is higher than the national 1%.

Reviewing the commercial taxes department, Shivakumar, who is also the finance minister, asked officials to prevent tax evasion. He said officials must coordinate with their counterparts from neighbouring states.

"No goods vehicles should cross a checkpost in our state borders without the necessary documents. There must be no scope for tax evasion. There is no room for any kind of compromise or negligence in this," Shivakumar told officers.

The government has information on 12 lakh taxpayers, Shivakumar said. "You have the capacity to analyse them from a 360-degree perspective using technology and data analytics," he said, adding that doing so can help exceed the target. In 2026-27, the government has fixed a target of Rs 1.25 lakh crore for commercial taxes.

Shivakumar said the government, in collaboration with IIT Hyderabad, is monitoring frauds through the GST analytics portal.

"Fake invoices and fake Input Tax Credit have become a major challenge. We are handling this challenge capably. By detecting bogus companies, we have collected Rs 166 crore," he said, calling for more legal action.

"Our intention is not to cause unnecessary trouble to anyone. Honest taxpayers must be taken into confidence. Every tax-paying citizen must be treated with dignity and respect," Shivakumar said.

GST Revenues up to May 2026

State	2025-26	2026-27	Growth
Maharashtra	Rs 68,513 cr	Rs 71,608 cr	5%
Karnataka	**Rs 29,500 cr**	**Rs 32,069 cr**	**9%**
Gujarat	Rs 25,500 cr	Rs 26,826 cr	5%
Tamil Nadu	Rs 24,578 cr	Rs 23,395 cr	-5%
Haryana	Rs 22,801 cr	Rs 24,365 cr	7%
Uttar Pradesh	Rs 19,928 cr	Rs 21,586 cr	8%
Delhi	Rs 18,485 cr	Rs 17,397 cr	-6%
Telangana	Rs 11,126 cr	Rs 12,226 cr	10%
Odisha	Rs 9,536 cr	Rs 9,112 cr	-4%
Kerala	Rs 6,625 cr	Rs 7,042 cr	6%
All India	**Rs 3,15,613 cr**	**Rs 3,19,653 cr**	**1%**

Source: CMO

D K SHIVAKUMAR
Chief Minister

"I'm observing everything. Information reaches me from every region of the state on a regular basis. From Chickpet to Gandhinagar, from the border districts to every part of the state, I have my own contacts. Any lapse or negligence will come to my notice. Therefore, the information reaching me and your performance reports must match.

Wash & repeat: Excise dept runs like commission-free money-laundering machine

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

The recent ED raid on the state's Excise Department unearthed a self-sustaining, zero-commission, money-laundering machine run by department officials and their benamis.

The central agency on Wednesday searched Y Manjunath, additional excise commissioner, Enforcement and Crime, Belagavi, and his alleged associates and other officials.

He is the brother-in-law of Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi, BJP MLAs Ramesh Jarkiholi, Balachandra Jarkiholi and MLC Lakhan Jarkiholi.

ED recovered Rs 13.3 crore in crime proceeds along with other incriminating evidence.

Officials uncovered a "unique modus operandi of money laundering" meticulously built within the department.

They learnt that most of the officers in the department obtained liquor licenses in the names of their family members and entities controlled by family members, illegally running their own liquor businesses. They projected the income generated from these businesses as legitimate.

Here's what makes it unique: these businesses essentially served as money-laundering entities for officers and their associates, who used them to "wash" bribes and other illegal income.

"Running a money laundering operation is expensive: you need to set up shell organisations, you need benamis, etc. Using the hawala route is also expensive, where the operator would charge 25-50% or even higher commission cut. Cryptocurrency laundering needs technical expertise," an ED source told *DH*.

Extortion racket

The suspect officials and their associates essentially built a zero-commission laundering machine. By bypassing the black market, they only had to pay standard business taxes for income generated from entities operated under the licenses they provided to their benamis.

The entire department, as per the ED, ran like an organised syndicate network of public officials, their associates and private individuals for the collection of bribes.

Here's where money-laundering played a key role: once corrupt money is generated—through fixed monthly bribes paid to field officers or payoffs during renewals, shifting and issuing fresh licenses—it is ultimately routed through liquor establishments operating under a benami license, thereby legitimising it alongside regular earnings.

Once the money was "washed", the suspects used it for personal consumption, investment in properties and businesses. What's more shocking is that the ED found a smoking gun: a bribe distribution cash book.

This essentially means that the bribes so collected were not isolated but meticulously maintained, centrally pooled and likely pumped to the higher-ups.

Audit paradox

Because the bars and liquor establishments were licensed to benamis, it essentially made the senior officers the shadow owners.

This makes an independent audit by field-level inspectors next to impossible.

"Can junior officers audit businesses they know are run by their bosses? All of this is an indication of how these businesses ran with such impunity," the source said.

Med colleges at Ramanagara, K'pura unlikely this year too

BENGALURU, DHNS: The medical colleges proposed to be set up at Ramanagara and Kanakapura are unlikely to be functional this year also.

Ramanagara has a district hospital and a temporary building to house the college.

However, the National Medical Commission (NMC) is yet to give the approval. Kanakapura lacks hospital, college building and staff also.

According to the sources from the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS), a team of experts from the NMC visited both the locations few days ago for an inspection.

"There is no communication from the NMC subsequent to the inspection. We are confident of getting nod for Ramanagara and doubtful about Kanakapura," said a source.

The RGUHS has decided to construct a 900-bed hitech hospital and a constituent college at its new campus coming up in Ramanagara. A proposal has been submitted to the government in this regard.

"We have made the proposal to the NMC this year also. This is a constituent college of the university, and hence it is necessary to have our own hospital," said Dr B C Bhagwan, Vice-Chancellor of the university.

The VC added that permission has been sought from the Finance department for recruiting faculty for Ramanagara medical college.

This is the third consecutive year the state government has applied to NMC for establishing medical colleges at Ramanagara and Kanakapura.

For the last two years the proposal was rejected due to lack of necessary infrastructure.

'Principals of govt colleges should verify docs of guest faculties'

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Department of Collegiate Education has asked the principals of government degree colleges to verify the documents submitted by guest faculties who have been hired through online counselling for the current academic year.

Following the instances reported last year where fake PhD and MPhil certificates were produced by the candidates, the department has instructed the principals to verify the documents and if any of them are found to be fake, the department has asked the principals to relieve such faculties immediately.

As instructed by the department, the PhD and other educational qualification documents have to be verified from the universities concerned.

Even the KSET, NET, Degree and Master Degree certificates, Rural and Kalyana Karnataka Certificates have to be verified from the authorities concerned and the details must be entered on the Education Management Information system (EMIS) portal of the department.

It can be recalled that in 2025-26 at least 200 guest faculties resigned fearing an inquiry into fake PhD and MPhil certificates. Following the complaints filed before Lokayukta about the fake document submission by the guest faculties, the department has initiated stricter action to ensure such instances don't repeat.

Verification committees at the college level have been constituted and they have to submit individual report to the principals.

Department had also issued Standard Operating Procedures to be followed by the principals of each government degree college while verifying the documents and certificates submitted by the candidates.

SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

Faithfuls take out a Muharram procession to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Muhammed, in Kalaburagi on Friday. DH PHOTO/TAJUIDDIN AZAD

Irrigation minister directs halt on engineers' deputation

BENGALURU DHNS: Minister for Major and Medium Irrigation Ramalinga Reddy has directed the additional chief secretary to the department to halt the practice of sending engineers on deputation to other departments with the aim of curbing delay in completion of projects.

In a note, the minister noted that the posts of superintendent engineer, executive engineer, assistant executive engineer, assistant engineer and junior engineer are vacant in the department delaying the progress of several projects of the department. He has directed not to send engineers of department to deputation and On Official Duty (OOD) to other departments.

He has instructed officials to call back the engineers deputed to other departments for more than two years.

Bitcoin scam: Bail denied to associates of Sriki and Nalapad brothers

PRAJWAL D' SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

A special court in Bengaluru has rejected the bail pleas of two accused persons in the multi-crore Bitcoin scam, who are allegedly linked to the prime accused Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki and the two sons of Karnataka Congress MLA N A Haris.

The Special Court of PMLA, Bengaluru, (CCH-1), on Thursday rejected the regular bail application filed by Sunish Hegde, Sriki's associate, as per court records seen by *DH*.

It also dismissed a bail application of Prasidh Shetty, who the ED claims is linked to Haris' sons Mohammed Haris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad, and Aqeeb Khan, the grandson of former Union Minister K Rahman Khan.

Senior standing counsel and special public prosecutor (SPP) Madhu N Rao represented the ED.

On May 8, the ED arrested Sriki and his associates, including Hegde. On April 20, the ED had raided Sriki and Haris' sons. The search also covered Aqeeb. ED claimed that Nalapad, Omar and Aqeeb were direct beneficiaries of crime proceeds.

ED has further alleged that Hegde, who owns gambling and poker businesses in the state, coerced Sriki into hacking PokerSaint and PokerBaazi. Hegde then approached the platform's owners, sought to "repair" them for Rs 2 crore. Sriki, in his statement, had described it as "an extortion game." Hegde also allegedly bankrolled Sriki and looked after his lavish lifestyle.

It is also alleged that from the Rs 2 crore that was extorted, Hegde received Rs 20 lakh in casino chips.

These were routed through an offshore gaming company and further through fund transfers to another accused and Sriki's accountant, Robin Khandelwal, and then to Hegde.

Shetty, along with Nalapad and Omar, benefited from the 2017 hacking by Sriki of Tumakuru-based Unocoin Technologies Private Limited, a crypto exchange, as per the ED.

Sriki had stolen approximately 60 Bitcoins, worth Rs 33.62 crore as on Friday.

What is the Bitcoin scam?

The multi-crore scam came to the fore after Sriki's arrest in November 2020 in a case related to buying hydro ganja on the dark web using Bitcoins.

The probe found that Sriki hacked into online poker sites, crypto exchanges and other websites.

Further investigations also revealed his alleged role in the hacking of the Karnataka government's e-procurement portal and stealing Rs 11.5 crore in funds in 2019.

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HC orders release of youth after girlfriend says relationship was consensual & they wish to marry

BENGALURU, DHNS

The high court has ordered release of a 19-year-old accused in a case of rape and sexual relationship on the pretext of promise of marriage. The court has also stayed proceedings against his family members in the FIR registered with the KR Puram police in Bengaluru.

"A young boy of nineteen years confined within prison walls faces dangers far greater than those that await him outside," Justice M Nagaprasanna observed in the interim order till July 30, the next date of hearing.

The petitioners, boy and two of his family members, argued that the boy was in a relationship with the complainant girl. It was further contended that the complaint was filed despite these circumstances.

On the other hand, the complainant girl, who appeared before the court, affirmed that their relationship was consensual and that both desire to marry each other.

Justice Nagaprasanna noted that whether the marriage can be permitted in law, considering the age and legal considerations, is an issue that can be examined at a later stage.

"The circumstance that has brought him (the petitioner) to incarceration is not one born out of violence, coercion, or predation, but one that emerges from the tender and often turbulent realm of youthful affection. He was in a relationship with the complainant who is herself nineteen years of age. What began as a bond of mutual affection between two young adults has, unfortunately, spiralled into criminal proceedings, drawing not merely the boy but even members of his family into the vortex of criminal prosecution," Justice Nagaprasanna said.

The court further said, "The material presently placed before this Court would, at least at this stage, indicate nothing more than a consensual relationship between two individuals who have both attained the age of majority. Criminal law, grave and solemn in its operation, cannot be permitted to overshadow every relationship that fails to conform to familial approval or societal comfort."

Drowning incidents: HDK seeks police outpost at Muthathi

MANDYA, DHNS: Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy has written to Home Minister Priyank Kharge seeking to open a police outpost near River Cauvery at Muthathi in the district. Five people drowned in the river at Muthathi recently.

H D Kumaraswamy

Expressing his shock at the drowning incident, Kumaraswamy sought that caution boards should be installed near the river. He has suggested the barbed wire fencing will prevent people from getting into the river

Lack of safety measures has resulted in the death of 82 people in the last 10 years at Muthathi, the popular picnic spot in Malavalli taluk, Mandya district.

Hundreds of tourists visit the place, as it has both nature, river and also a temple. The devotees coming to the temple, get into the river for bathing or swimming, resulting in drowning incidents.

Even though there is a board citing the danger of getting into the river, people don't give heed to it, it is complained.

'No links with Shivakumar': Vijayendra...

Vijayendra, From Page 1

Vijayendra alleged that a misinformation campaign had been carried out against him.

"Standing in this sacred place, I want to state that during the cross-voting episode, rumours were spread about my relationship and closeness with D K Shivakumar. I am aware that some people within our party contributed to it," he said.

"As the state president of the BJP, I will never indulge in such low-level politics. I have no business dealings or personal relationship with D K Shivakumar. The respect I have shown him is the courtesy extended to a chief minister and KPCC president," Vijayendra said.

"I have prayed for the well-being of those who had spread false propaganda against me," he added.

"The truth on cross-voting will come out. The BJP high command has also collected information. I will speak to MLC C T Ravi on the fact-finding committee report on cross-voting after reaching Bengaluru," he said. On K S Eshwarappa's statement on 'purchase of MLAs', Vijayendra said, "17 MLAs had joined the BJP by trusting the leadership of B S Yediyurappa to form a stable government. Even Eshwarappa enjoyed his tenure as Panchayat Raj Rural Development Minister during that government," he said.

He also revealed that former Chief Minister D V Sadananda Gowda had attempted to contact him after the cross-voting incident, but the call could not get connected.

Vijayendra also announced that the BJP would unveil its agitation against the Bidadi Township project in Bengaluru on Saturday. "We will not allow displacement of farmers," he said.

Tungabhadra adopted as model river to check pollution

Sources polluting the river identified

The Central Monitoring Committee, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Jal Shakti, had flagged the deterioration of River Tungabhadra and asked the state government to prepare an action plan for restoration of the river on priority. DH FILE PHOTO

CHIRANJEEVI KULAKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government has adopted Tungabhadra as a model river with a plan to take up works for stopping the flow of domestic sewage and industrial effluents into the river - which was added to the list of polluted river stretches in Karnataka by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The Central Monitoring Committee, Department of Water Resources, Ministry of Jal Shakti had flagged the deterioration of the river and asked the state government to prepare an action plan for restoration of Tungabhadra "on priority".

Officials said Karnataka has adopted Tungabhadra as a "model river" and the sources of pollution for the river have been identified. These include domestic sewage coming from Harihar, Davangere and Honnali. The stretch from Dadesugur bridge to Honnali bridge has been identified as the polluted stretch of the river.

The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board had recently said that work was in progress to instal sewage treatment plants and also to provide underground drainage network to ensure that the sewage flows to the treatment plants. The government has installed four real-time monitoring stations to assess the quality of the river.

Apart from Tungabhadra, the stretches where waters of several rivers were polluted have been identified. In the case of Arkavathi, the stretch from Hesaraghatta to the downstream of Kanakapura town was identified as a polluted stretch.

In the case of Cauvery, the downstream of KR Nagar to the confluence at Sangam is polluted while Kabini is polluted from Saragur to the point where water is drawn for Narasipura town. Similarly, polluted stretches were identified for Krishna, Bhima, Kagina, Shimsha, Malaprabha, Ghataprabha and other rivers.

In April, Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development Department, Tushar Girinath directed the stakeholder organisations, including KSPCB, to provide data on a monthly basis regarding the action taken to end pollution of the rivers.

Spurious toddy leaves...

Spurious toddy, From Page 1

A large number of people, especially labourers, consume this chemical mixture as it is cheaper and apparently gives more 'kick'. Besides chloral hydrate, the intoxicant is mixed with other chemicals to make it stronger. Unscientific mixing of these chemicals can even lead to deaths.

Officials said bootleggers use five grams of CH powder to produce one litre of spurious toddy.

While even manufacture and consumption of plant-based toddy is banned in Karnataka, barring Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, the manufacture, sale and distribution of chloral hydrate is banned for human use under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act across the country.

Sources in the department said both CH and toddy are brought into Karnataka from neighboring states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, where the latter is legal.

Raichur reported the highest of seizure of the banned chemical, with excise officials in the district seizing more than 1,033 kg of CH powder and 16,905 litres of spurious toddy in the last three years.

Apart from the Kalyana Karnataka region, the consumption of CH-mixed toddy is higher in Chikkaballapur, Tumakuru and Chitradurga districts.

"CH powder is usually used as a painkiller by veterinary doctors for cattle. However, given its high intoxicating properties, many people, especially those involved in laborious jobs, consume it. The drink is very hazardous to health as repeated consumption impacts the nervous system," said Excise Department Additional Commissioner Basavaraj Somannavar.

In spite of setting up of checkposts on roads leading to the two Telugu states and regular raids, CH-mixed toddy sneaks into Karnataka due to its porous borders and unchecked railway routes, the official said.

Basavaraj said that limited human resources in border districts is an impediment in preventing the entry of spurious toddy.

"Unless the neighboring states ban this harmful liquor, preventing its consumption would be difficult in Karnataka," he said. He said Karnataka is making efforts to get chloral hydrate banned by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and regulate it under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act to make sure that violators get stricter punishment.

Pejawar seer welcomes SIT probe into Ram Mandir fund 'misuse'

UDUPI, DHNS

Pejawar Mutt seer and Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust Trustee Vishwaprasanna Theertha Swami on Friday said he would refrain from commenting on the allegations of financial irregularities in the Ram Mandir until the Trust's meeting scheduled for July 11, where the issue is expected to be discussed.

Speaking to reporters in Udupi, the seer said he would participate in the meeting, understand the facts, and respond only after the matter is officially deliberated.

Welcoming the ongoing Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into the alleged irregularities, the seer said the investigation was a positive development. "If any wrongdoing has occurred, it must be thoroughly examined and those responsible should face appropriate punishment. This is a place of faith for devotees from across India and abroad. Such incidents should never occur here. The truth must come out at the earliest," he added.

The seer revealed that he had repeatedly offered suggestions during the Trust meetings and whenever he visited Ayodhya.

Govt allows full-fledged safari operations in Bandipur, Nagarahole

BENGALURU, DHNS

A tiger on the prowl at Bandipur National Park, in Gundlupet taluk. The state government has decided to "fully reopen" the safari in Bandipur and Nagarahole reserves. It said the decision was based on a carrying capacity report by the technical committee of experts. DH FILE PHOTO

Four months after resuming the safari in Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves with limitations, the state government on Friday resumed the commercial activity by removing the restrictions placed earlier.

The farmer protests in the wake of deaths attributed to tiger attacks had forced the government to cancel safari in November 2025. In February, the government resumed the safari by limiting the trips to conclude activity earlier in the day.

A statement from the Chief Minister's office said the government has decided to "fully reopen" the safari in the two reserves. It said the decision was based on a carrying capacity report by the technical committee of experts.

"The Technical Committee's report has been accepted by the state government, and directions have been issued to operate the jungle safari in a regulated manner, in line with the Committee's recommendations," it added.

Further, the statement said the state holds immense potential in sustainable eco-tourism, which generates employment and livelihood opportunities while boosting local economy. It promised to follow a model that safeguards ecological integrity.

Safari is conducted in two routes each of Bandipur and Nagarahole. The resumption in February had allowed five to six hour trips on the four routes with limitations on the number of trips in the evening. The full fledged operations are expected to remove the limitations, allowing additional revenue generation.

8 held over Ram Temple cash row

Ram Temple, from Page 1

He said Tinnu Yadav was not a bank employee but worked as a driver, while Subhash Srivastava was in charge of the donation counting process.

Those arrested included Ramashankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav, Luvkush Mishra, Anukalp Mishra, Manish Yadav, Avinash Shukla, Karunesh Pandey, Ramashankar Mishra and Subhash Srivastava. A large amount of cash was recovered from the residences of Luvkush Mishra and Ramashankar Yadav during a raid a few days back.

Those arrested were booked under sections 306 (theft by clerk or servant), 316 (criminal breach of trust), 317 (receiving stolen property dishonestly) and 61 (criminal conspiracy) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita (BNS).

The Opposition however continued to breathe fire at the government, questioning the omission of names of key functionaries of the Trust and arresting only what they termed 'small fish'.

The police said that further action in the matter would be taken depending upon the evidence that emerges during the course of the investigation.

Allegations of 'embezzlement' of cash offerings emerged earlier this month but Rai rejected the reports saying that regular audits of the accounts were made and that no irregularities were found.

The matter gained nationwide attention after Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav raised it and asked for the court's intervention. Later, several senior BJP leaders and prominent Ayodhya-based seers also joined the issue and sought an impartial probe into the matter. The PMO also sought a report from the Trust in this regard but the latter refused to provide it, citing the ongoing SIT probe.

The state government later formed a three-member SIT which submitted its interim report on Tuesday.

Dumping sewage into Mookambika sanctuary: Forest dept seeks action

BENGALURU, DHNS

Prompted by the dumping of lakhs of litres of sewage into Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, senior Forest Department officials visited the site on Friday with civic officials and asked that the serious violations of the Wildlife (Protection) Act be checked.

Sowparnika river is one of the lifelines of the 247 sq km sanctuary, named after the deity of Kollur. However, commercialisation of tourism in Kollur has led to rapid development of homestays, hotels and other establishments.

In April, *DH* reported that Kollur should have had a functioning sewage treatment plant (STP) with a capacity to treat 1.5 million litres per day.

However, despite an ongoing case in the National Green Tribunal for over three years, officials have neglected the matter, leading to lakhs of litres of sewage dumped into the sanctuary and flowing into the Sowparnika river.

The *DH* report had also highlighted that as per Section 29 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, any damage caused to a habitat or wild animal "by any act" is an offence punishable with up to three-year imprisonment and penalty.

KUMAR PUSHKAR
Principal Chief Conservator Forests (Wildlife)

"The high nutrient load during summer is a major issue. I explained to the civic officials the importance of stopping the sewage flow urgently and diverting the treated water. Unless it is water fit for drinking, releasing it to wildlife may have unforeseen consequences.

Averting a crisis

Principal Chief Conservator Forests (Wildlife) Kumar Pushkar, who visited the sanctuary on Friday, took stock of the situation and pulled up forest officers for failing to enforce the rules.

He also held a meeting with the officials of the Kollur gram panchayath, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage.

Pushkar told *DH* that sewage flow into the sanctuary in summer was a matter of concern as monsoon provides alternative sources of water for animals. "The high nutrient load during summer is a major issue. I explained to the civic officials the importance of stopping the sewage flow urgently and diverting the treated water. Unless it is water fit for drinking, releasing it to wildlife may have unforeseen consequences," he said.

Responding to a question, he agreed that the monitoring committee has to look into the commercial projects.

Commercialisation of tourism in Kollur has led to rapid development of homestays and hotels.

"We have to support development. However, the monitoring committee has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the commercial activities are sustainable," he added.

Hrish Tholar, an activist who has taken the matter to the tribunal, said the department has delayed action. "It has been more than three years since I started requesting action. They check the river in monsoon when the sewage is diluted. It is in the summer we can see raw sewage and its impact on fish," he added.

School Edu Dept revises timings for Saturdays

BENGALURU, DHNS

According to the new order, classes on Saturdays are to be held between 8:30am to 12.30pm henceforth.

The Department of School Education and Literacy has issued an order revising the school timings for Saturdays.

According to the new order, classes on Saturdays are to be held between 8:30am to 12.30pm henceforth. The objective behind the revision in the timings is to have in place a schedule that is both teacher and student friendly.

In Bengaluru several schools commence classes as early as 7.30am even on Saturdays. The department has issued instructions stating that schools follow the revised timings.

This makes it convenient for students and teachers to arrive at school comfortably.

Currently, different regions in the state follow different school timings. In some places, classes are held from 8am to 12pm, while they are held between 7.30am and 11.30am at others. The new rule, revising the schedule, is aimed at ensuring uniform timings across schools in the state.

As explained by the department the timing has been fixed to make it convenient to follow Online Attendance.

It is said that the new rule was indirectly influenced by the online attendance system that the state government has implemented for government employees — the first-of-its-kind in the country. "From the perspective of teachers and students, and with the intention of having uniform timings across the state, school timings for Saturdays have been revised," said an official of the department.

KPTCL leverages drone technology for high-voltage transmission maintenance

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL) has deployed advanced drone technology for the inspection of High Voltage (HV) and Extra High Voltage (EHV) transmission corridors across the state.

The initiative has enabled the inspection of more than 11,000 transmission towers. It has also enabled the identification and rectification of over 1.5 lakh technical defects, besides effecting a remarkable 85% reduction in transmission-related power outages.

Energy Minister K J George said that inspecting the vast power transmission network spanning nearly 45,000 kilometers through conventional methods is both time-consuming, which makes the employment of technology vital.

"By deploying drones equipped with thermal imaging and LiDAR technologies, we can now conduct comprehensive 360-degree inspections of transmission assets in a fraction of the time. The technology enables our engineers to detect even the smallest defects that are invisible to the naked eye. Achieving an 85% reduction in outages through inspection-led intervention is a major milestone in KPTCL's digital transformation journey," George said.

The drone-based inspection has significantly enhanced both operational efficiency, while also ensuring workforce safety by reducing the need for manual inspections in difficult terrain and high-risk locations, KPTCL said in a statement.

"The data collected through drone surveys is being integrated into KPTCL's digital asset management ecosystem and will eventually be linked to the corporation's upcoming Digital Twin Platform, enabling real-time monitoring of the transmission network from the central control room," the statement said.

KPTCL MD Dr Ramprasat Manohar V said that the initiative will help the implementation of the predictive maintenance model instead of acting on faults after they appear.

Jana Nayagan film producer is TN govt's spl rep in Delhi

Venkata Narayana is ex-CEO of a B'luru-based realty group

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

KVN Productions' founder Venkata Narayana K, producer of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's last film 'Jana Nayagan', has been named as the Tamil Nadu government's special representative in New Delhi, leading to a political storm.

Venkata Narayana is a former CEO of Bengaluru-based real estate group Prestige and a resident of the Karnataka capital. His appointment, notified via a government order dated June 23, comes as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are fighting over the latter's proposal to build a reservoir across the River Cauvery at Mekedatu.

Opposition parties asked tough questions of Vijay's government, seeking to know whether it could not find an "eligible person" from the state for the crucial post.

Their criticism centred on Narayana's lack of administrative and political experience and his not hailing from Tamil Nadu. Special representative is a significant post with a Cabinet rank, who acts as the nodal officer for coordination between the Tamil Nadu Government and the Union Government in New Delhi.

The film 'Jana Nayagan' has been stuck with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) for the past six months.

Venkata Narayana accompanied Vijay to the Lok Bhavan on May 8 while staking claim to form the government, triggering a major row. He speaks Tamil and Telugu (his mother tongue) along with Kannada and English.

This is probably the first time in recent years that a non-political person has been appointed as the Special Representative.

In the past, A K S Vijayan, Thalavai Sundaram, Nagai Asokan, Cumbum Selvendiran, S T K Jagakaiyan — all politicians from the DMK and AIADMK — were appointed to the post.

The GO issued by Chief Secretary M Sai Kumar said Venkata Narayana K is appointed as special representative to the Government of Tamil Nadu in New Delhi. "The terms and conditions for the appointment of Thiru Venkata Narayana K as Special Representative to the Government of Tamil Nadu at New Delhi will be issued separately," the order added.

While questions were raised about his appointment, seeking to know whether Venkata Narayana was being rewarded for his close association with Vijay, sources justified the decision.

"He is the CM's choice," a source said, adding that Venkata Narayana is a highly-connected person and a "right fit" for the post.

"His job is to act as a bridge between the TN Govt and the Union government in New Delhi. He will be responsible for fixing appointments for the CM and other government functionaries visiting New Delhi," the source added.

This is the second controversial appointment by the Vijay government after naming the Chief Minister's personal astrologer, Rickey Radhan Pandit Vettrivel, as OSD (Political) in the CMO. The appointment was withdrawn immediately after an outrage from several quarters.

SAINIK SCHOOL KODAGU (KARNATAKA)
VILLAGE – KUDIGE, KUSHALNAGAR, PIN: 571 232
RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION NO : 05/ JUN 2026

1. Sainik School Kodagu, an autonomous institution functioning under Sainik Schools Society, Ministry of Defence, invites applications from the eligible candidates (Indian Citizens Only) for the Contractual posts as mentioned below:-

Ser. NO.	Name of the Post	Category	No. of Posts
1	WARD BOY	UR	3

2. For detailed Notification and Application Form, visit School website **www.sainikschoolkodagu.edu.in** from **27 Jun 26**. The School administration reserves the right to cancel the vacancy due to administrative reasons.

Sd/- PRINCIPAL

इसरो ISRO
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
U.R. RAO SATELLITE CENTRE
CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE GROUP
HAL Old Airport Road, Bangalore - 560 017
(Phone: 080 25084156, 4184)
CORRIGENDUM - I

Sl. No	Description	Details
1.	Name of work	Renovation of Existing Toilets in VIP Canteen Building & C&MG Building at ISITE Campus, URSC, Marathahalli, Bengaluru - 560037.
2.	E-Tender Notice No.	URSC/C&MG/C/M/17/2026-27 dated: 03/06/2026
3.	Estimated cost put to tender	₹ 20.87 Lakhs
4.	Period during which the tender document can be downloaded.	Extended upto 16.30 hrs on 06/07/2026
5.	Last date and time for receipt of tenders	Up to 14.30 hrs. on 09/07/2026
6.	Due date and time of opening of tenders	After 14.31 hrs on 09/07/2026

Interested tenderers may please refer Detailed Notice Inviting E-Tender (NIET) for eligibility criteria and other details along with Hindi version in website: **www.isro.gov.in** and download the tender documents from **www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO**.

Group Director, C & MG, URSC

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Rule of compliance: Amend, restrain

The amendment to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act [FCRA] rules, notified by the Union government this week, has made the law's provisions more stringent, constraining the activities of NGOs and other organisations that fall under the law's purview. This is the 10th amendment to these rules since 2011. Questions arise on the risks of repeated amendments altering the law's character and eventually diluting its original purpose. Earlier this year, the government brought forward an FCRA Amendment Bill ahead of Assembly elections in some states, but shelved it following public criticism, especially from minorities groups. The question of legislative propriety is relevant, given that the latest amendment is seen as a revival of this aborted intent.

According to the new rules, all associations seeking foreign funding must register for a specific field of work, ending the broad permissions previously available under the law. NGOs are now required to disclose their social media accounts, websites, publications, and other activities, significantly expanding the obligations of compliance. While foreign contributions may still support social, educational, religious, economic, and cultural programmes, organisations must clearly specify both the purpose and location of fund utilisation; violations attract penalties. The rules identify 105 permitted activities but do not specifically include health, despite it being a major area of work for many NGOs. While religious education, documentation of faith traditions, and preservation of indigenous beliefs remain permissible, proselytisation is prohibited. Minority organisations fear that legitimate religious or cultural activities could nevertheless be interpreted as attempts at conversion, exposing them to scrutiny. By confining organisations to narrowly defined fields, the regulations may force many to curtail their work or seek multiple registrations, increasing costs without guaranteeing approval. Mandatory disclosure of publications is seen as restricting freedom of expression and undermining an organisation's right to communicate its work.

The FCRA amendment shrinks NGOs' operational space, further expanding government control over civil society

The cumulative impact of these restrictions is to shrink the operational space of NGOs while raising the risk of penalties for actions that authorities may interpret as rule violations. The regulations also grant the government greater scope to monitor, influence, and potentially control the functioning of civil society organisations. Critics fear the rules could extend beyond minority organisations to target citizen rights groups, environmental organisations, research institutions, and other bodies that challenge official policies. The broad scope for interpretation raises concerns that dissent and criticism may be selectively suppressed. Reflecting these anxieties over the amended rules, some Christian organisations have called for June 28 to be observed as a Day of Prayer.

Step one on the promised path

Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda's announcement of a city-wide 'Safe Footpath Campaign' beginning on July 1 is a long-overdue intervention. In a city where pedestrians are treated as an afterthought, the decision to reclaim footpaths and prioritise walking infrastructure addresses one of Bengaluru's most neglected civic concerns. Footpaths are not a luxury. They are a basic component of urban life and a fundamental right. Every day, thousands of schoolchildren, senior citizens, office-goers, and ordinary residents are forced onto busy roads because pavements are broken, encroached upon or converted into parking lots.

The consequences are visible: pedestrians account for nearly 30% of Bengaluru's annual road fatalities. The government's focus on clearing encroachments, towing vehicles parked on walkways, and repairing damaged pavements along 2,000 kilometres of major roads is, therefore, both necessary and overdue. The allocation of Rs 70 crore to fix uneven surfaces, broken slabs, and other structural deficiencies is equally welcome. If implemented sincerely, these measures could significantly improve safety and restore a measure of dignity to daily commuting. Yet Bengalureans have reasons to remain sceptical. Successive governments have unveiled grand visions of transforming Bengaluru into a global metropolis while failing to provide basic civic infrastructure. Residents no longer seek futuristic dreams; they simply want footpaths they can walk on, roads free of potholes, efficient garbage collection, and streets that do not flood after every heavy shower. If Byre Gowda succeeds in ensuring uninterrupted, safe, and accessible footpaths, citizens will gladly judge the campaign a success. The public must also become active participants. Authorities should establish a dedicated platform through which residents can upload photographs and videos of broken pavements, illegal parking, construction debris, and other obstructions. Citizen monitoring can help officials quickly identify problem areas.

Bengaluru's 'Safe Footpath Campaign' revives familiar goals. Lasting success will depend on sustained implementation

Street vendors may pose the toughest challenge. Previous clearance drives failed because authorities often neglected the requirements of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. Any lasting solution must balance pedestrians' rights with vendors' livelihoods through surveys, Town Vending Committees, and demarcated vending zones. Without legal rehabilitation mechanisms, eviction drives are unlikely to endure. The true test of the 'Safe Footpath Campaign' will be its longevity. Bengaluru's pedestrians have heard enough promises. They now deserve results.

LIVING LAYOUTS

Beyond plantations, a truly resilient Bengaluru

The city's ecological crisis stems from the disappearance of recharge landscapes, not a shortage of trees

ADITHYA P AND ABI T VANAK

Bengaluru's urban expansion has come at the cost of its ecological commons. These include the permeable surfaces of its tank networks, dry deciduous forests, and open natural ecosystems. Over the last 20 years, the city has reportedly witnessed a 1.5°C increase in average temperatures and lost around 65 lakes. Over 50 years, the loss is reported to be 79% in water cover and 88% in forest cover. Under real estate, quarrying, and developmental pressures, municipal planning has taken a limited view of the role of its remaining urban and peri-urban natural ecosystems. Addressing issues of urban heat and water insecurity requires the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) to answer a critical question: What role should these ecosystems play in shaping a more liveable Bengaluru?

Besides its expanding paved surfaces, the city's landscapes are a mosaic of granite outcrops, dry tropical forests, thorny shrubs, low trees, and semi-arid grasslands. The Bannerghatta National Park, Hesaraghatta Conservation Reserve, and the modified university campuses of GKVK and IISc reflect these realities in different measures. In these open natural ecosystems (ONEs), trees are spaced apart, allowing sunlight to reach the ground and support a rich understory of grasses, herbs, pollinators, insects, and birds. Compared to intensively irrigated plantations, these ecosystems are adapted to local rainfall regimes and require far fewer external inputs. The city's ecological planning should incorporate this reality.

Bengaluru currently extracts groundwater faster than it is naturally replenished, and natural recharge accounts for only a small fraction of the total recharge. Additionally, run-off in the wet season is significantly higher than in the dry season. The fractured granitic rocks that hold its groundwater fill up during the monsoon and deplete fast during the summer. Its seasonal recharge depends on the availability of permeable surfaces, open land, and drainage networks that allow rainfall to infiltrate rather than run off. Open natural spaces are well-suited to absorb run-off, and approaches such as 'sponge city programmes' have been shown to improve groundwater levels in urban landscapes. Increasing the total area of open fallow spaces and wetlands increases recharge.

In seasonally dry Bengaluru, dense water-intensive plantations and parks can also be net extractors of groundwater. Replacing open habitats with dense plantations can increase evapotranspiration, increase irrigation requirements, and reduce recharge. Additionally, with the proposed development of AI townships and data centres, and the diversion of water-rich rural lands, water scarcity is set to increase. However, ignoring these considerations, large-scale water-intensive plantation programmes seem to find a prominent place in the BDA's current ecological interventions. Bengaluru's ecological crisis shouldn't be understood as a shortage of trees, but as one of disappearing recharge landscapes, wetlands, open ecosystems, and permeable surfaces.

Mass plantation campaigns generate a significant amount of political goodwill, cashed in photographs and volunteer mobilisation. Under the BDA's supervision, Bengaluru is set to plant 1.5 million saplings in 12 hours on the occasion of Kempegowda Jayanti, aiming to break a Guinness record. The plantation programmes are being planned in BDA-developed areas, including Banashankari 6th Stage, Dr Shivaram Karanth Layout, and Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout. 50,000 volunteers from government departments, NGOs, MNCs, and universities are supporting the effort. The three-year monitoring and plantation aftercare programme is expected to be coordinated with resident welfare associations and volunteers, overseen by the BDA's forest division, the Forest Department, and a monitoring panel.

While environmental campaigns are well-intentioned, whether they deliver the expected outcomes remains unknown. From a water-budgeting lens, for example, the BDA's reported plans to sanction borewells to ensure the survivability of these 'Miyawaki-style' plantations should raise red flags.

A Miyawaki fad, prioritising optical greenery over all, has gripped certain sections of Bengaluru. Miyawaki plantations (incorrectly referred to as Miyawaki 'forests') involve planting dense clusters of native saplings close together with intensive irrigation to create fast-growing thickets in small urban spaces. Water availability is crucial for the survival of these plantations. Governments and corporations increasingly promote this approach as an effective answer to declining urban greenery as they grow rapidly and produce visible results within a short period.

These plantations may also involve extensive land clearing of open ecosystems. Clearing existing vegetation, digging and overturning soil, and large additions of compost and manure alter the soil's ecological character. Healthy soils, with their local seed banks and soil microbiomes including fungi, bacteria, and insects, are living systems built over time. Without paying attention to the existing ecological processes in each parcel of land, generalised lists of native plants, heavy watering, and manured soil may not create a self-sustaining community that can address Bengaluru's water and heat woes.

From plantations to functional habitats

An important question to ask before the next plantation cycle is: With semi-arid Bengaluru becoming more water-stressed, will a water-intensive plantation remain viable? Bengaluru's future resilience depends on recognising the ecological value of its lakes, rocky outcrops, open woodlands, grasslands, and recharge landscapes. The challenge before planners is to restore the ecological processes that allow the city to live better within its water budget.

Conserving water bodies, protecting Bengaluru's deciduous forests and open natural ecosystems, and maintaining low-cost grassy biomes and parks are the most effective ways to moderate temperatures and mitigate 'heat wave' conditions. In smaller urban environments, open fallows that absorb run-offs can play a significant role in conserving water. These ecosystems function as living infrastructures, supporting groundwater recharge, regulating microclimates, and improving the city's liveability.

A healthy landscape is defined by its socio-ecological relationships; it includes high biodiversity and high social-use values, healthy soils, and space for natural regeneration and succession. As Bengaluru grapples with both flooding and water scarcity, urban planning must move beyond tree-planting targets and prioritise the restoration of the city's green-blue infrastructure: the interconnected network of lakes, wetlands, open spaces, and native vegetation.

(Adithya is a senior policy analyst, and Abi is Director, Centre for Policy Design, at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment [ATREE], Bengaluru)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

The unbelievable futurists

My questions were answered but my belief remains unchanged

WG CDR H R SEETHARAM (RETD)

It was one of those evenings when we senior citizens would sit on the park bench discussing anything under the sun. That day, the discussion veered to astrologers, palmists and futurists. Each one had a story to tell about their experience. To some, the predictions were eerily correct and to others they were vague or totally wrong. When it came to my turn I told them my experience.

If you ask me if I believed in predictions, my answer would be a firm no. Most of them can tell fairly accurately one's nature or past events. But my one experience, however, surprised me by its accuracy. As a young student living in a hostel, someone said that there is a person in Bengaluru East who will answer three questions for just one rupee. He never looked at your questions. You wrote them, sealed them, and kept the paper with you. As students we had only two questions. Will we pass the exam and will we get jobs ? We could not understand how he knew our questions.

Many years passed and I became a prospective groom. In those days girls would be brought home or the boys would go to their houses for the 'interview'. This was a difficult period for both the boys and girls to decide whom to choose as their life partner.

Suddenly, I thought of this person in Bengaluru East. I wrote my questions on a piece of paper, put it in an envelope, sealed it, put it in my pocket and went to meet him hoping he was still around. He was there, older, sitting on the floor with a number of gods' pictures adorning the wall behind him. An oil lamp was burning and the room was filled with the fragrance of *agarbathis*. I sat on the floor far away and kept the envelope on the floor in front of me. He closed his eyes and seemed to pray. After some time he opened his eyes and answered each question.

"You will get a proposal in February and you will get married in August. She will be from a place Southeast of Bengaluru and her name begins with 'S'. You will get married in August. She is Jupiter born and will be a good wife for you."

I did not tell anyone about my visit. Right enough, in the month of February we got a letter from a person in Mysuru saying that he would be coming over with his daughter named 'Shalla'. When they came over, I had only one question to ask her: Was she Jupiter born. Yes, she was. We didn't get married in August but seven months later in March. We celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary a few years back.

Even now, if you ask me if I believed in futurists, my answer is still no. As they say, one swallow does not make a summer.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Temple row reveals systemic and moral decay

I refer to 'A test of integrity and transparency' (Jun 26). The confirmation by the special investigation team of severe irregularities in the management of donations at the Ayodhya Ram Temple is nothing short of a betrayal. Millions of devotees, from impoverished families offering their last pennies to affluent donors, contributed to this sacred space with pure devotion. To learn that an organised racket allegedly embezzled these funds is a grotesque insult to their faith. The preliminary findings' exposure of massive lapses, including bypassing dress codes, compromising CCTV surveillance, and unauthorised cash handling, reveals deep systemic and moral decay.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

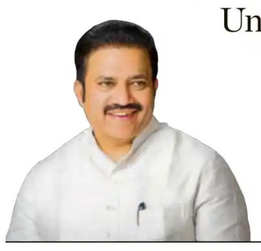
Who is a citizen?

The debate around what constitutes proof of citizenship in India raises a troubling question for ordinary citizens. If a birth certificate issued by a government hospital, a voter ID card, a PAN card from the I-T Department, an Aadhaar card with biometric details, and a passport issued by the Government of India after police verification and scrutiny by multiple government agencies, taken together, do not establish a person's citizenship, then what exactly does? This raises a fundamental question: if someone with lifelong roots in India and multiple government-issued identity documents cannot confidently say, "I am an Indian citizen," then what exactly is the standard? The burden of proof cannot be placed endlessly on ordinary people. Citizenship should not become a political test or a bureaucratic trap. It is a constitutional status, not a certificate of loyalty issued by any party, organisation, or ideology.

Narendra J M, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT



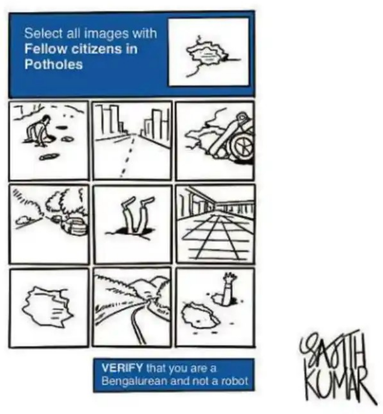
Our MP is not someone who can be controlled... Everyone is with us. Under Supriya Tai (Sule)'s leadership, everyone is working together...

Shashikant Shinde, NCP (SP) leader (On speculation about NCP (SP) MPs switching sides)

Doubt is an uncomfortable condition, but certainty is a ridiculous one.

Voltaire

TO BE PRECISE



IN PERSPECTIVE

Clothe the law, not the statue

By clothing a 4,500-year-old statue, the NCERT exposes a colonial fiction that India's criminal law refused to abandon

SUMIT BAUDH

In a Class 9 arts textbook, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) presented students with a familiar image. The Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro from approximately 4,500 years ago appeared with her torso shaded from the shoulders downward, her nudity covered, her body effectively clothed.

The backlash was swift. Historians called it censorship. NCERT, to its credit, reversed the decision. But the reversal does not undo the meaning of the act. Someone, at some institutional level, looked at a pre-Vedic civilisational artefact and decided that its nude female form required covering. No policy was cited. No explanation was offered. The instinct simply operated, but the law has a name for this instinct. It is called "modesty of a woman".

The phrase entered criminal law through the Indian Penal Code (IPC) of 1860, which penalised the "outraging" of a woman's modesty without defining the term. Courts filled the gap by treating modesty as a natural feminine attribute requiring no elaboration. In practice, the protectable woman was implicitly upper-caste, middle-class, domestically confined, and behaviourally deferential. Women outside this norm found their claims to protection structurally weakened by the very framework that claimed to protect them.

When Parliament enacted the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in 2023, it was presented as a historic rupture with colonial criminal law. BNS Section 79 penalises actions intended to insult the "modesty of a woman". The language is almost verbatim from the IPC. The colonial concept survived the decolonising reform. This is not a minor drafting oversight. It is a substantive failure.

The NCERT episode illustrates this framework's logical endpoint. The Dancing Girl was made in a time that predates the textual traditions of female modesty as a Brahminical virtue and the Victorian sexual morality carried in the IPC. She stands in a posture that the archaeologist who named her in 1926 associated with *nautch* girls: professional female entertainers who, in the colonial-Brahminical social order of their time, occupied the category of the "immodest woman". The naming was itself an act of gendered-colonial classification, projecting anachronistic social hierarchy onto an object.

To now clothe her – in textbooks, in 2026 – is to extend the modesty framework across four and a half millennia, to a time and place where it may not have existed. The absurdity of this move is the argument: when a legal-cultural reflex reaches back across millennia to dress a statue, it reveals its incoherence.

Consider the recent invocation of Sections 75 and 79 of the BNS, that is, sexual harassment and intent to insult the modesty of a woman, in connection with social media posts describing women journalists as prostitutes.

Here, publicly visible and professionally assertive women are reaching for the "modesty" provision because it is the closest available instrument to what they need: a legal recognition that their dignity as persons – not their conformity to behavioural norms – has been violated. The modesty framework cannot deliver this. Modesty, as constructed in the law, is precisely what women who refuse domestic confinement are presumed to lack. To invoke it against those who publicly degrade them is to use a framework against its own logic.

Protection by hierarchy

This is not a new problem. In 1979, in the Mathura rape case, the Supreme Court infamously held that a young Adivasi woman's prior sexual history rendered her consent to intercourse with two policemen plausible *(Tukaram v. State of Maharashtra)*. The Court's reasoning reproduced the modesty framework's deepest assumption: that a woman already classified as immodest has no further modesty to protect.

In its landmark decisions, such as *Navtej Singh Johar* (2018), the Supreme Court has progressively articulated dignity as a constitutional value – one that belongs to the person and cannot be made conditional on behavioural conformity. Dignity does not require a woman to be modest to be protectable.

The law reform argument is, therefore, not merely that modesty is a colonial residue. It is that the concept actively produces a hierarchy of protectable and unprotectable women. Women who conform to the Brahminical-Victorian template of femininity receive its protection. Women who do not – by virtue of caste, profession, gender non-conformity, or simply the refusal to be silent – are disadvantaged by the very provision that claims to protect them.

Replacing modesty with dignity is a fundamental change in the kind of subject the law recognises as deserving protection. The BNS had the opportunity to make that change in 2023. It did not. The next reform effort must.

(The writer is a professor of law at the Jindal Global University)

SANGH UNDER SCANNER

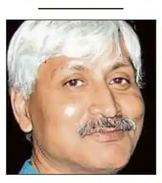
Convenient shield of ambiguity

APOORVANAND

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals and organisations provided food, medicines, and other essentials to stranded workers and those who had lost their livelihoods. Many had to submit detailed accounts of the money spent and, in some cases, even the names, phone numbers and Aadhaar details of beneficiaries.

One can imagine how humiliating it must have felt for a hungry person receiving five kilograms of grain to part with personal details to qualify for assistance. Yet the government defended these requirements as necessary for transparency and accountability.

Numerous voluntary organisations have lost licences for allegedly departing from their declared objectives. They face extensive oversight, must disclose their social media presence and office-bearers' associations, and are subject to restrictions on public communication.



Consider, then, the exacting standards of transparency to which voluntary organisations are held. Then consider the refusal of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) to place its own organisational and financial affairs within a comparable framework of accountability.

As Priyank Kharge, Karnataka's home minister, raises the question, the RSS argues that it is an open organisation and, since it receives no government funding, does not need to register itself. Its chief has compared the organisation to Hinduism.

This is not an answer so much as an evasion. Not every association is legally required to register itself. But it remains difficult to understand why an organisation claiming to shape the nation's destiny should resist formal mechanisms of accountability. After all, in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's words, the RSS is the largest NGO in India.

Kharge is justified in arguing that the state has every right to demand transparency. Public money is used to manage traffic, secure routes and maintain public infrastructure for its marches and gatherings. The claim that it exists entirely outside public accountability is difficult to sustain.

Was Nathuram Godse a member of the RSS? If so, when did he join or leave? Without formal membership records, such questions remain unresolved. Ambiguity becomes a shield.

Did the RSS formally authorise the demolition of the Babri Masjid? Publicly available records do not answer that question because the organisation's internal decision-making is seldom documented in formal resolutions. The VHP, Bajrang Dal and other organisations are widely understood to function within the broader Sangh Parivar. Yet legal responsibility becomes difficult to establish when those relationships remain informal.

Similarly, the BJP functions as the political arm through which the RSS seeks electoral influence. But how does one legally demonstrate this relationship when so much remains unwritten? The same ambiguity surrounds Organiser and Panchjanya, widely regarded as its ideological voice, though not formally owned by it.

Several commissions of inquiry into communal violence have examined the role of organisations associated with the Sangh Parivar. Yet the RSS has consistently denied responsibility for their actions.

Organisations such as SIMI and the Popular Front of India have been banned, but questions of holding the RSS accountable for alleged violence involving the VHP or Bajrang Dal rarely arise.

Only after the ban following Gandhi's assassination was the RSS forced to adopt a written constitution. Even today, much of its functioning remains opaque.

The RSS maintains a disciplined, uniformed cadre structure with regular drills and physical training, often described as quasi-military. It provides ideological training aimed at transforming India into a Hindu Rashtra. Such a vision violates the constitutional commitment to a secular republic. Yet authorities have seldom subjected it to the standards of accountability routinely imposed on other organisations.

But it is not a spiritual or religious entity. It is a worldly organisation pursuing a profoundly political project. Beneath the rhetoric of cultural renewal lies the political ambition to transform a constitutional democracy founded on equal citizenship into a majoritarian state organised around religious identity.

(The writer teaches at Delhi University. The views are personal.)

RSS: Through the Decades

1925: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded by **K B Hedgewar** in Nagpur

1940: **M S Golwalkar** takes over the second Sarsanghchalak

1948–49: RSS is banned after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination; the ban is lifted after it adopts a written constitution

1951: Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) is founded by **Syama Prasad Mookerjee** with key RSS functionaries

1962–63: RSS volunteers provide civilian support to the Indian Army during the **Sino-Indian War**, join the Republic Day parade

1973: **Balasaheb Deoras** becomes the third Sarsanghchalak

1975–77: RSS is banned during the Emergency, BJS merges with the Janata Party

1980: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is born out of the Janata Party

1984–92: RSS plays a key role in the **Ram Janmabhoomi** movement

1992–93: The organisation faces its third ban after the **Babri Masjid** demolition; it is lifted months later

1994: **Rajendra Singh** becomes Sarsanghchalak

2000: **K S Sudarshan** succeeds him

2009: **Mohan Bhagwat** takes over as the sixth Sarsanghchalak

2014, 2019 & 2024: BJP wins three successive Lok Sabha elections under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a former RSS pracharak

2025: RSS celebrates its centenary

Karnataka: Registration Row

2025: Oct 4: Panchayat Raj Minister **Priyank Kharge** writes to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah seeking a ban on the RSS's activities on government premises

Oct 13: Priyank writes again to Siddaramaiah, seeking action against government employees linked to the RSS

Oct 17: Govt. suspends Panchayat Development Officer **Praveen Kumar** for attending an RSS centenary event in **Raichur** on October 12

Oct 18: Govt. makes prior permission mandatory for any private organisation, association or group of persons to use government property or premises

Oct 28: Karnataka High Court stays the order, citing violation of fundamental rights

Nov 2: Priyank shares a document, claiming that the RSS **"officially stated"** that it had not registered as an entity

Nov 9: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat says in Bengaluru that the organisation is a **'body of individuals'**, adds that even Hindu Dharma is not registered

2026: June 7: Priyank, now home minister, asks the RSS to keep documents ready for registration

June 14: Bhagwat rejects the calls for the RSS to register

June 15: Priyank releases his June 13 letter to Bhagwat seeking details on the RSS's legal status and income

COMPILED BY BHARATH JOSHI, DHNS

Well within legal framework

ARUN ANAND

Many critics of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) often demand that it should register as a non-governmental organisation. This creates the impression that the RSS exists in a legal vacuum and lacks transparency about its funds because it is not registered as an NGO.

However, the fact of the matter is that there are concrete legal precedents that have dealt with both the legal status of the RSS and Gurudakshina, the principal source of its funding. Gurudakshina is a voluntary contribution offered by RSS swayamsevaks to the saffron flag, regarded as 'Guru'. The RSS doesn't accept any other donations.

Legal status of the RSS

Under Article 19(1)(c) of the Constitution of India, all citizens possess the fundamental right to form associations, unions, or cooperative societies. It is not mandatory for every organisation working for society to register as an NGO.

Indian judiciary and tax tribunals have long recognised and dealt with the RSS as a legitimate Body of Individuals (BOI). Under Indian tax law, there are two distinct categories of voluntary organisations: an Association of Persons (AOP) and a Body of Individuals (BOI). While an AOP often takes the form of a registered society, trust, or NGO, a BOI does not require any mandatory registration.

The landmark judgment

The 1994 judgment of the Patna High Court in Commissioner of Income-Tax v. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh clarified both the legal framework and financial structure of the RSS.

The dispute concerned whether the Gurudakshina received by the RSS was liable to income tax for the assessment years 1967–68 to 1975–76. The Income Tax Department sought to tax these contributions, while the RSS argued that they were exempt because of the nature of the organisation and the character of the contributions. The matter travelled through the Income Tax Appellate Tribunals in Bombay and Patna before ultimately reaching the Patna High Court. The Court ruled entirely in favour of the RSS.

A key foundation of the judgment was a Circular issued by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on December 19, 1978. Invoking the Principle of Mutuality, the CBDT had stated: "Gurudakshina received by the respondent-assessee (RSS) from its members is exempt from tax on the principle of mutuality."

According to the Patna High Court judgment, the specific questions referred to the Court in this case were: "(i) Whether, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case, the principle of mutuality exists in the RSS? (ii) Whether, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case, the amount received from members and devotees can be taken to be Gurudakshina and held to be exempt?"

The Court ruled: "We answer question No. (i) referred to us in the affirmative, against the Revenue and in favour of the assessee. We reframe question No. (ii) by deleting the word 'devotees' occurring therein, and reframe the question in the following manner: 'Whether, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case, the amounts received from members can be taken to be Gurudakshina and held to be exempt?' We answer question No. (ii) so reframed in the affirmative, in favour of the assessee and against the Revenue."

Principle of Mutuality

The Principle of Mutuality is a well-established legal doctrine recognised by Indian courts. It holds that when a group of individuals contribute funds for a common, non-commercial purpose and the contributors and beneficiaries are essentially the same set of persons, the resulting receipts cannot be treated as taxable income in the ordinary commercial sense.

Therefore, the commonly repeated claim that the RSS operates outside any legal framework overlooks both established constitutional principles and judicial precedents that have repeatedly recognised its legal status and financial structure.

(The writer has authored several books on the RSS)

Coexistence: Beyond the slogan

A study emphasises that co-existence must be a shared and negotiated process, as human-wildlife interactions rise, writes Gana Kedlaya

In India, the rise in tiger populations and the launch of new tiger reserves are widely celebrated. However, as many reserves reach their tiger carrying capacity, serious consequences have emerged. Locals near these forests increasingly face threats to life and livelihood from tiger interactions, as seen recently in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. While tiger conservation is critical, coexistence is equally important.

To truly celebrate this success, it is urgent to view coexistence as a shared and negotiated process in which costs, responsibilities, and risks are fairly acknowledged, rather than a moral obligation placed solely on rural communities, a new study emphasises.

Published in 2026 for *People and Nature*, the study, *Living with tigers: Perceptions of risk, equity, and cultural change amidst tiger attacks in a reserve's buffer zone* authored by Ashraf Shaikh, a wildlife biologist with the Maharashtra Forest Department, currently working in Melghat Tiger Reserve, and Kulbhushansingh Suryawanshi, the director of India Program at the Snow Leopard Trust and a scientist with the Nature Conservation Foundation, examines this growing conservation conundrum in India.

The authors analysed human-tiger interactions in the buffer zone of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, comparing households that faced tiger attacks with those from the same villages that did not. They reviewed forest department records of 80 attacks on people between 2014 and 2024 and interviewed 50 individuals from 16 villages.

Building on these findings, the authors noted many households valued tigers and accepted their presence. However, for those repeatedly exposed to attacks, the impact went beyond ideology. Tiger presence directly affected their livelihood choices and sense of safety. As one local expressed in the study, "There is no safe work left. Whether we are in the field, the forest, or the road, the tiger can be anywhere." Many fishermen have stopped fishing after seeing tigers in the lake, and fear now pervades most areas near homes.

Locals shared their experiences, from disappointment with National Park restrictions to threats posed by increasing tiger populations and short-term reactive measures. Other factors included the impacts of overtourism, observations of tiger behaviour, and the effects of low prey populations. Most respondents, aside from fear, showed consistent frustration, often directed at the forest department rather than the tigers. Locals felt the department prioritised wildlife over human safety.

A majority considered tiger population management critical. At the same time, they expressed reverence for the tiger's ecological role in maintaining forest balance and limiting crop damage from wild herbivores. Many felt empathy: "Like we need space, they also need space to survive. It's not the tiger's fault if it comes close; its forest is shrinking," a Gond local told the interviewers. Lead author Ashraf believes these inputs are important because they shape how people understand risk and respond to it.

What stood out was that the difference between non-victims and victims was not in their understanding of coexistence, but in how they lived it. Coexistence is often discussed at broad scales, but locals here experience it unevenly at the household level. It shaped everyday decisions about work, mobility, livelihoods, and safety.

The role of coexistence

In May 2026, four women died in a tiger attack in a single day, the seventh this year, in Chandrapur, Maharashtra. An RTI response in the same month revealed that in the last 6 years, human-wildlife interactions in the state have led to 501 human deaths, injured over 4000 people and caused the loss of over 30,000 livestock. In 2025, the state forest minister urged officials to study global approaches to mitigating such interactions. But when will local voices, who have communicated their needs and demands for decades, shape these policies? Why does this matter?

Many participants in the study felt that management responses were largely reactive, focusing on compensation after an incident rather than addressing their everyday anxieties. Many also believed their perspectives were acknowledged bureaucratically, but not genuinely integrated into decision-making. "In our study, many respondents were not asking for the removal of tigers. What they wanted was recognition, safety, accountability, and a meaningful role in shaping how coexistence is governed," explains Ashraf.

What has the coexistence narrative normalised, what is made visible, and what remains unattended under the banner? Ashraf explains that it has helped move conservation away from older fortress models that excluded people entirely, and that is important. "However, it can also normalise unequal burdens by making coexistence appear socially uniform or mutually agreed upon, when in reality, some households absorb far greater risks than others. While the narrative highlights the success of species recovery and the potential for humans and wildlife to share landscapes, it often conceals the uneven lived realities beneath that success. Fear, livelihood disruption, and constant adaptation experienced by families can disappear within aggregated concepts such as 'community tolerance' or 'village acceptance'."

When discussing co-existence, shouldn't we ask: who shapes the narrative and on whose behalf? Are those required to adapt the same people who define the process? Who determines what level of risk is acceptable and who bears those risks daily?

"In many conservation landscapes, the people most exposed to danger often have the least influence over how coexistence is defined or governed. A more ethical conversation about coexistence must take everyday experiences more seriously, especially when risks are concentrated among particular households or occupations," says Ashraf.

As human-wildlife interactions rise across India, the authors insist that conservation success should be evaluated through the lens of equity, recognition, and lived experience. If coexistence narratives and policies are to remain meaningful and legitimate, they must engage more seriously with the realities faced by people living in high-risk shared landscapes.

(The author is an independent science reporter)

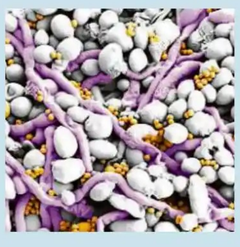
DID YOU KNOW?

'Copper unites microbial pathogens'

Scientists have discovered that two common human pathogens can cooperate by managing copper in their shared environment, a finding that could open new ways to tackle stubborn mixed biofilm infections.

The fungus Candida albicans and the bacterium Staphylococcus aureus are major causes of human disease and are often found together in wounds, bloodstream infections and infections linked to medical devices. When microbes form biofilms — surface-attached communities — they become much harder to eliminate. Mixed fungal-bacterial biofilms are particularly difficult to treat because the organisms can protect and support one another.

Now, researchers led by Dr Seána Duggan of the University of Exeter's MRC Centre for Medical Mycology have identified copper as a key factor in this partnership. Their study, published in Microbiology, describes a microbial "copper economy" in which the fungus and bacterium manage copper in complementary ways to sustain their shared biofilm."We usually think about copper as something that can kill microbes because high levels are toxic," Duggan said. "Our study reveals something more nuanced. In these mixed biofilms, copper appears to act almost like a shared currency that helps two very different pathogens cooperate. When that copper balance is disturbed, the partnership collapses."



The researchers grew the two microbes together under laboratory conditions designed to mimic the human body. They found the mixed community produced larger and more active biofilms than either organism alone. Protein analysis showed that C. albicans increased the abundance of proteins involved in copper uptake, whereas S. aureus increased the abundance of proteins associated with copper export and protection against copper stress.

When copper availability was altered—either increased or reduced—the mixed biofilm weakened, demonstrating that the microbial partnership depends on a finely balanced copper environment.

"The most striking thing was that the mixed biofilm was much more sensitive to copper disruption than either organism alone," Duggan said. "We are looking at the biology of the relationship between them."

The study also found that copper influenced the biofilm's physical structure, while preliminary experiments suggest copper-based approaches could help dismantle these microbial communities.

The findings highlight the importance of studying mixed infections rather than single pathogens, and suggest that disrupting copper balance could be a new strategy for breaking apart difficult-to-treat biofilms. - Phys.org

Convicts have no right to benefit from illegal sentences: Top court

Clears the way for appellate courts to correct such illegal sentences

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has held that the bar under Section 386(b) of the CrPC does not empower an accused to demand the continuation of a sentence that is forbidden by law, clearing the way for appellate courts to correct such illegal sentences even in appeals filed by convicts.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan upheld the Sikkim High Court's decision to enhance the sentence of two men convicted in a gang rape case from 12 years to the mandatory 20 years of rigorous imprisonment.

The ruling is expected to have wider implications in cases where trial courts erroneously award sentences below the minimum prescribed by law for serious offences, including rape and gang rape.

The apex court observed that while an accused has the right to challenge his conviction, he has no vested right to insist upon an illegal or sub-minimum sentence.

"The accused has a right to challenge his conviction, but he has no right to insist upon the continuance of an illegal sentence," the bench emphasised.

The case stemmed from a 2021 gang rape incident in Sikkim. The trial court convicted Karan Chettri and the other accused under Section 376D (gang rape) read with Section 34 of the IPC and sentenced them to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment along with a fine.

The Sikkim High Court upheld the conviction but enhanced the sentence to 20 years, noting that the trial court's order was contrary to the statutory minimum prescribed under Section 376D.

Dismissing the appeals filed by the convicts, the Supreme Court ruled that substituting an illegal sentence with the mandatory minimum does not amount to an "enhancement" of punishment in the true sense under Section 386(b) of CrPC.

"It is merely a suo motu correction of an error apparent on the face of the record, undertaken to give effect to the law as it is and to restore legality to sentencing process," the bench said. The court clarified that in an appeal preferred by the accused, a High Court cannot suo motu enhance the sentence by exercising revisional powers under Section 401 of the CrPC while sitting in appeal.

However, when the sentence imposed by the trial court is itself illegal and below the statutory minimum, correcting it to bring it in line with the law does not violate the prohibition under Section 386(b).

CBSE relief on 3-language policy for Classes 7-9

NEW DELHI, PTI

In a relief to lakhs of CBSE students currently studying in Classes 7 to 9 and who have opted for two foreign languages under three-language policy, they will be allowed to continue with the same language combination till Class 10, officials said on Friday.

The development comes over a month after the Central Board of Secondary Education announced that the study of three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, has been made compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1.

Several students and parents had approached the court against the CBSE order.

"The requirement of studying at least two Indian languages under the new language policy will be implemented prospectively from Class 6 and will not be applied retrospectively to students already studying in Classes 7 to 9," a senior board official said.

"An official notification clarifying the same will be issued soon," the official added.

The Board had said in May that till the dedicated R3 textbooks are available, Class 9 students shall use the Class 6 R3 textbooks (2026-27 edition) of the chosen language.

The move is part of the CBSE's alignment of its scheme of studies with the National Education Policy 2020 and National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023. According to the circular issued on May 15, students opting for a foreign language may do so only as the third language after studying two native Indian languages.

In April, the CBSE had announced a phased implementation of the three-language formula from Class 6 and the introduction of a two-level system for mathematics and science for Class 9 from the 2026-27 academic session.

Under the proposed structure, mathematics and science will have two levels -- mandatory standard and optional advanced courses.

Govt plans overhaul of foodgrain scheme for poorest-of-poor

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Central government is proposing to overhaul the foodgrain entitlement under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) by shifting from a fixed 35 kg per household per month to 7 kg per person per month, capped at 35 kg.

The move is reportedly aimed at making the scheme more equitable.

The Union Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs has proposed amendments to the National Food Security Act, 2013, and released the National Food Security (Amendment) Bill, 2026, for public consultation, inviting comments till July 13.

Under the current system, AAY households — identified as the poorest of the poor — receive a flat 35 kg of foodgrains per month, irrespective of the number of family members. In contrast, priority households get 5 kg per person every month.

"The existing household-based entitlement under Antyodaya Anna Yojana, though intended as a protective measure for the most vulnerable families, results in significant inequities depending upon the size of the household," the ministry said in a statement.

Proposed changes

If the amendment is approved, AAY beneficiaries will receive 7 kg of foodgrains per person per month, subject to a maximum cap of 35 kg per household.

Sarthak Sidhant launches website with 1.66 cr govt procurement files

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Sarthak Sidhant, the 18-year-old student who blew the lid off the tendering issues in the selection of firms for onscreen marking (OSM) of answer sheets of the CBSE Class 12 exams, has now launched a website where he has collated procurement data from nearly 1.66 crore files from government sites.

Announcing the development on X on Friday, Sarthak said he worked on it because "transparency needs to be accessible".

The 1.66 crore files have been sourced from the government's Central Public Procurement Portal (CPPP), which has details of tenders from across the country.

"The Nation's procurement database is now publicly available to all [sic]," he said in the post.

"Every rupee the government spends goes through a tender. A notice is published, bids are invited, a winner is selected, a contract is signed. This process is, in theory, the immune system of public finance. In practice, it is where most large-scale procurement corruption quietly occurs [sic]," he wrote.

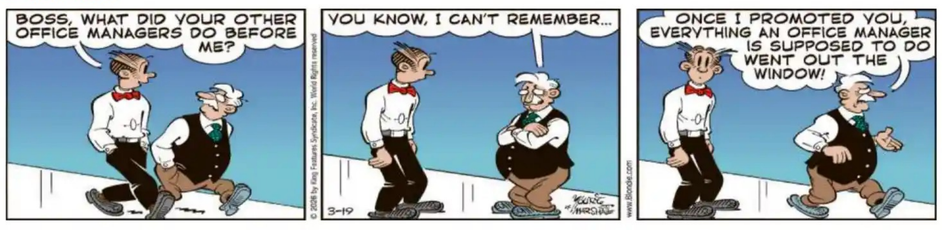
Sarthak said he spent three weeks building a "high-throughput scraper" that systematically crawled and archived the CPP portal, the government's public procurement database.

Sarthak also said that the point of making the site was to extend "an open and unequivocally cordial invite to all tech people, journalists, data scientists, researchers, investors, lawyers, contractors & citizens [sic]".

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

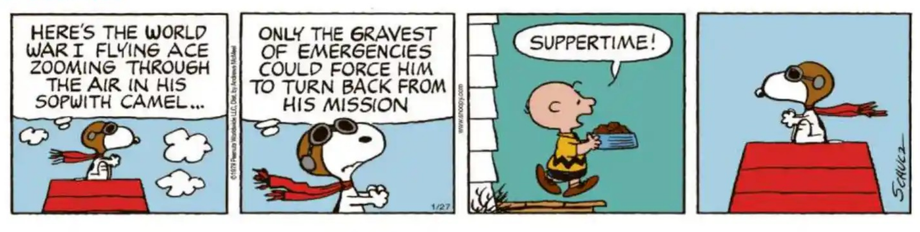
Blondie


BOSS, WHAT DID YOUR OTHER OFFICE MANAGERS DO BEFORE ME?
YOU KNOW, I CAN'T REMEMBER...
ONCE I PROMOTED YOU, EVERYTHING AN OFFICE MANAGER IS SUPPOSED TO DO WENT OUT THE WINDOW!

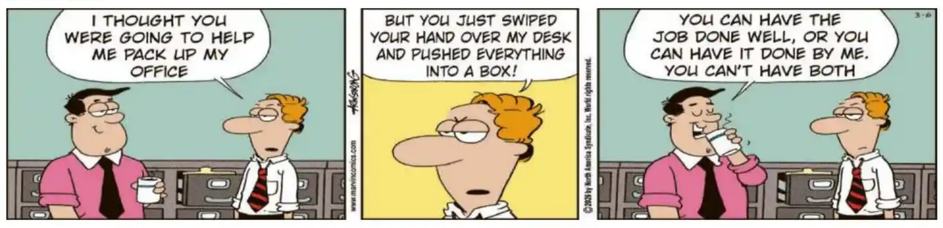
Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

Peanuts


HERE'S THE WORLD WAR I FLYING ACE ZOOMING THROUGH THE AIR IN HIS SOPWITH CAMEL...
ONLY THE GRAVEST OF EMERGENCIES COULD FORCE HIM TO TURN BACK FROM HIS MISSION
SUPPERTIME!

Marvin


I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO HELP ME PACK UP MY OFFICE
BUT YOU JUST SWIPED YOUR HAND OVER MY DESK AND PUSHED EVERYTHING INTO A BOX!
YOU CAN HAVE THE JOB DONE WELL, OR YOU CAN HAVE IT DONE BY ME. YOU CAN'T HAVE BOTH

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RAATP

CRPHE

HYIGLH

YACNOR

Whoa! I think I may have found your problem.
Oh, boy! That sounds clearer already.
12
16
THE PROBLEM WITH HIS EARS WAS JUST WAX BUILDUP, WHICH HE WAS ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app · Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: NUTTY JUDGE DIVIDE SWEATY
Answer: She was uncertain about the chicken appetizer recipes and decided to — JUST WING IT

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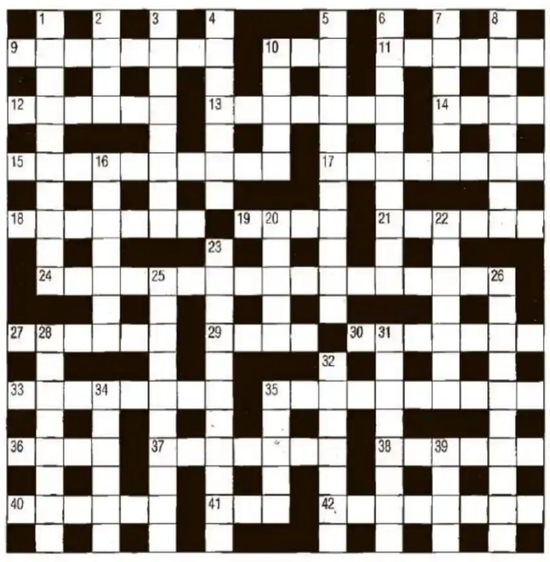
CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 4046



CRYPTIC

ACROSS

9 Nero chased the two inside: it was easy (2,6)
10 Over the figure quoted (3)
11 She is also in trouble (6)
12 Goes round to get the garments (6)
13 Wasn't silent when examined by the doctor (7)
14 Shy, for actors (4)
15 How the kisses were deleted? (7,3)
17 Good-looking and generous (8)
18 Rub in the preparation, mum, to make it shine (7)
19 He's up to it, by all accounts (4)
21 Went off thoroughly confused (6)
24 "Resigning" in service terminology? (9,4,4)
27 We'll have no more of that! Plug up the hole (4,2)
29 Tell you just how old the fruit is (4)
30 Get ready to cut and stuff inside (7)
33 Be holding the group of aliens, or foreigners (8)
35 Land, having arrived for some peace and quiet (4,2,4)
36 I went inside and snooped - lost no time (4)
37 Subdue the child that has a gun (7)
38 What taught one to have smaller bets? (6)
40 It's terribly sore, doctor, swallowing: worse than before (4,2)
41 A fellow man (3)
42 Gobbledygook? Of course it's not! (8)

DOWN

1 Appears to be a rotunda when one views it (5,5)
2 French for "rain cats and dogs" (4)
3 Kitchen gadgets with which barbers are familiar (8)
4 Continue working as a valet? (5,2)
5 Don't go away to do some fishing? (4,3,4)
6 Rains and is most upsetting to foreigners (10)
7 In the Olympics, does the record go to America for it? (6)
8 Soup, cold, to take on the river (8)
10 Hope you can rely on (5)
16 Makes fun of the frantic puss with the tail caught in it (5,2)
20 Bay in which the fish take the bait, you say (5)
22 Dispenser that's always slipping out of one's hand? (7)
23 With the "Best wishes" go loving looks (4,7)
25 Not very friendly and a bit cheeky (6,4)
26 Unscrews and frees (5,5)
28 What got the char all mixed up? (8)
31 Talking on and on and frightening one (8)
32 Among the ten runners, mine is leading (7)
34 Certainly it's the smart thing to do (6)
35 Interrupt with "Copper and another metal" (3,2)
39 Weep tears as you cast off? (4)

ACROSS

9 Presumed to be true (8)
10 Sturdy African antelope (3)
11 Doing something (6)
12 Public road (6)
13 Enticed (7)
14 Collective traditional knowledge (4)
15 Non-elite party members (5,5)
17 Animal with large antlers (8)
18 Basic principles (7)
19 Daybreak (4)
21 Warning (3-3)
24 Port in NE England (9-4-4)
27 Feeling of disgust (6)
29 Louse's eggs (4)
30 Of crucial importance (7)
33 Assisting in crime (8)
35 Astounding (10)
36 Locking bar (4)
37 Descriptive language (7)
38 Fickleness (6)
40 Surroundings (6)
41 Jump on one foot (3)
42 Opposite of something (8)

DOWN

1 Edible seed (6,4)
2 Recess in church (4)
3 Difficult to understand (8)
4 Single copy of newspaper (7)
5 Street urchin (11)
6 Tough and realistic (4-6)
7 Showing little emotion (6)
8 Over the page (8)
10 Pastimes (5)
16 Writes carelessly (7)
20 Vigilantly attentive (5)
22 Structural board (7)
23 Branch of anthropology (11)
25 Extremely greedy (10)
26 Withdrawal to safety (10)
28 Food of the gods (8)
31 Set of beliefs (8)
32 Able to float (7)
34 Choice morsel (6)
35 Soak in liquid (5)
39 Large containers (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12447

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 1, Props 6, Us-ury 9, Leo-nine 10, Stoat 11, Da-RN-s 12, Bagel 13, Al-leg-ed 15, Ill 17, Le-er 18, Agenda 19, Piano 20, Chop-in 22, Pear (-main) 24, Eon 25, Devoted 26, Ban-Al 27, Valid 28, Hab-I-t 29, Topcoat 30, Never 31, Dolly

DOWN: 2, Rattle 3, P-layer 4, Set 5, Knead 6, Und-E-rgo 7, Sea-l 8, R-onal-d. 12, B-e.g.-in 13, Alice 14, Lemon 15, In-let 16, Lair-d 18, Angel 19, Picador 21, Ho.-race 22, Potato 23, Aerial 25, Dance 26, Bit-e 28, Had

EASY

ACROSS: 1, Happy 6, Stash 9, Recover 10, Siren 11, Ranch 12, Tulip 13, Capital 15, Bra 17, Ales 18, Cutlet 19, Minus 20, Enamel 22, Dean 24, Run 25, Finesse 26, Latin 27, Again 28, Eager 29, Ailment 30, Stern 31, Delta

DOWN: 2, Animal 3, Precis 4, Yen 5, Mogul 6, Serious 7, Trap 8, Secure 12, Tamil 13, Caber 14, Pecan 15, Blues 16, Atone 18, Cumin 19, Melanin 21, Nugget 22, Debate 23, Assent 25, Films 26, Liar 28, End

◆ SU-DO-KU-6943 ◆

9	6			2				8
3	8		9	6		5		
5				8	1			
7		8			2	1		4
	5	4		9		7	3	
1		9	7			8		6
			4	1				3
		6		3	9		7	5
8				7			6	1

easy

3	6	2	9	4	8	5	1	7
8	5	7	1	6	3	9	2	4
9	1	4	2	5	7	3	6	8
5	9	3	7	2	6	4	8	1
7	4	6	8	1	9	2	3	5
1	2	8	4	3	5	7	9	6
2	8	9	6	7	4	1	5	3
6	7	5	3	9	1	8	4	2
4	3	1	5	8	2	6	7	9

SOLUTION TO 6942

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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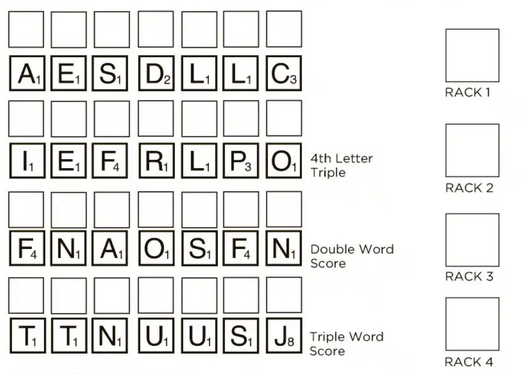
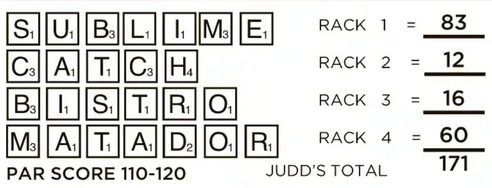

A1 E1 S1 D2 L1 L1 C3
RACK 1
I1 E1 F4 R1 L1 P3 O1
4th Letter Triple
RACK 2
F4 N1 A1 O1 S1 F4 N1
Double Word Score
RACK 3
T1 T1 N1 U1 U1 S1 J8
Triple Word Score
RACK 4

PAR SCORE 90-100
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



RACK 1 = 83
RACK 2 = 12
RACK 3 = 16
RACK 4 = 60
JUDD'S TOTAL 171

PAR SCORE 110-120

HITORI-3397

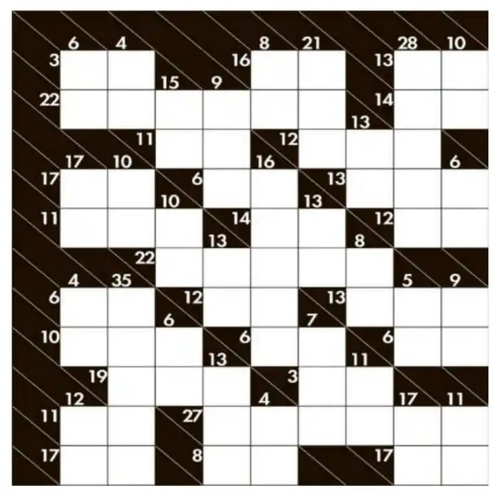
6	7	4	8	2	3	5	4
7	4	3	2	4	4	8	3
2	4	1	6	8	7	7	5
4	1	2	7	5	4	3	6
1	3	4	4	6	8	4	2
4	2	6	3	3	4	7	1
3	4	7	2	4	4	8	8
3	8	4	5	7	6	1	3

SOLUTION TO 3396

1	■	8	2	■	4	7	■
8	3	1	■	4	5	■	6
7	■	5	1	3	■	2	4
■	6	2	■	1	7	3	■
5	4	3	6	■	2	■	1
■	2	7	■	8	6	4	5
3	5	4	8	■	1	■	2
■	7	■	3	2	■	1	8

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

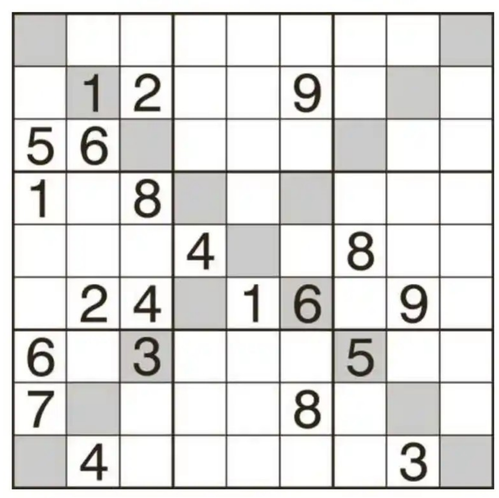
KAKURO- 3397



SOLUTION TO 3396

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3959



SOLUTION TO 3958

8	1	9	4	7	3	2	6	5
2	6	4	8	5	1	9	3	7
7	3	5	9	2	6	1	8	4
6	5	7	1	8	2	3	4	9
3	4	2	6	9	5	8	7	1
1	9	8	7	3	4	6	5	2
5	2	6	3	4	9	7	1	8
9	8	3	5	1	7	4	2	6
4	7	1	2	6	8	5	9	3

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

AYODHYA SCAM: 'Self-proclaimed protectors of Hinduism have been completely exposed'

Cong demands SC-monitored probe

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Congress on Friday demanded a probe by a sitting Supreme Court judge and dissolution of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust following the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Congress general secretary (Organisation) K C Venugopal said the "self-proclaimed protectors" of Hinduism have been "completely exposed" with the revelations of the "theft of donations" at the Temple.

He alleged that the BJP-RSS "looted from donations of ordinary devotees" and made a "complete mockery of their sentiments" after using Ayodhya for their "divisive politics".

Venugopal claimed that the BJP, on one hand, wants to control registered NGOs through "draconian" FCRA rules, while "completely unregistered entities like the RSS are free to loot and plunder" the temples in the country.

"The Sangh Parivar's farce of being true Hindus is even further exposed because the FIR registered currently does not even name the trustees who were entrusted with temple funds. Instead, the UP Police SIT has only identified low-level office bearers without implicating those at the top of this mega racket," he said.

"Only an independent investigation headed by a sitting SC judge will unearth the magnitude of this loot," he said.

At a press conference, Congress MP Rajeev Shukla claimed that low-level employees were being targeted instead of those "truly responsible", while insisting on an investigation to ascertain whether such people could steal by switching off CCTV cameras without the collusion of senior officials.

Congress Media and Publicity Department chairman Pawan Khera said the "organised loot" was "not merely financial embezzlement" but an "embezzlement of faith" itself.

"This is not a theft from devotees who donated in the name of Lord Ram. It is a theft from Lord Ram himself. The resignation of Champat Rai... clearly aimed at burying this scandal, is an insult to Lord Ram and every one of His devotees. Let the RSS-BJP and the PMO know that they cannot wash their hands of this scandal simply by orchestrating a resignation," he said.

Reacting to Friday's development, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said Ayodhya would prove to be the "Lanka" for BJP and the mask of the "devout" would come off.

"The *Lanka Kaand* of the BJP will take place in Ayodhya itself. The mask worn by these 'daanbhakto' (devotees of charity) has finally come off, because the Lord's divine power has indeed revealed its miracle," Yadav said on X in Hindi.

K C VENUGOPAL
Congress general secretary

"The Sangh Parivar's farce of being true Hindus is even further exposed because the FIR registered currently does not even name the trustees who were entrusted with temple funds. Instead, the UP Police SIT has only identified low-level office bearers without implicating those at the top of this mega racket.

Police personnel escort the accused to a court in connection with the alleged embezzlement of Ram Temple donation funds, in Ayodhya, on Friday. PTI

No info on Champat Rai quitting temple trust: VHP

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) — a core member of the Sangh Parivar that is led by the BJP's ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) — on Friday said it had no knowledge of reports that its international vice-president Champat Rai had resigned as general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust amid the controversy over alleged embezzlement of Ram Temple donations.

Rai and trustee Anil Mishra have stepped down from their positions on "moral grounds" following the registration of an FIR and an ongoing probe into the alleged diversion of devotees' offerings at the temple.

However, there was no immediate confirmation from the trust regarding the reported resignation.

Reacting to the reports, VHP leaders said the organisation had not been informed of any such decision by Rai.

"We have no information regarding Champat Rai resigning from the trust," a senior VHP functionary told reporters, declining to comment further on the development.

The statement marks a shift from the organisation's position last week, when the VHP publicly defended Rai against allegations linked to the donation controversy and called for a wider probe into all trusts that collected funds in the Ram Temple's name.

The RSS, with which Rai has long been associated through the Sangh Parivar, has not issued any official statement on the reported resignation.

Rai, one of the most prominent faces of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, has served as general secretary of the temple trust since its formation in 2020.

VISHWAPRASANNA TIRTHA SWAMIJI
Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust Member

Being a member of the trust I cannot comment on anything now based on what others have said. On July 11 there is a trust's meeting, I'm going. After knowing what the matter is, I will place things before you (Media).

Adityanath talks tough to protect his pro-Hindutva image

ANALYSIS

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's handling of the alleged 'embezzlement' of cash offerings at the Ram Temple is being perceived as an attempt to not only further cement his position as an 'uncompromising face' of Hindutva but also convey the message that he was ready to take on anyone, even leaders within his own party as well as the RSS.

Adityanath's fiery speech at a meeting in Deoria on Friday, where he warned those 'playing with the faith of Rambhakts' of grave consequences, appeared to be aimed at the Ram Temple Trust office bearers, many of whom have an RSS background, and also senior Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders. "Whosoever plays with the faith of Sanatan will pay the cost," he said.

Eight of the nine accused persons, whose names figured in the FIR lodged in connection with the alleged 'embezzlement', were arrested, while Trust general secretary Champat Rai and another key member of the Trust, Anil Mishra, resigned.

The resignation of Champat Rai, who had a long association with the RSS, surprised many in the BJP, as Rai was believed to have the backing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the RSS.

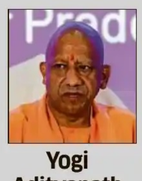
In fact, several VHP leaders publicly vouched for Rai's 'honesty' and integrity, saying that he had given his best years to the Ram Temple movement and lived the life of a 'saint'. Rai was popularly called 'Patwari' (a local govt official responsible for maintaining village-level land records and collection of land taxes) of Ram Lala.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the formation of the Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust in 2020, and the centre nominated its members.

"The CM's action shows that he will not make any compromise on any issue that may hurt the sentiments of the Hindus... Rambhakts across the world felt betrayed by the allegations of embezzlement of their donations," a state BJP leader said.

"We will not spare the guilty whosoever he may be," said Dy CM Brijesh Pathak.

HARDLINER CM



Yogi Adityanath

- Adityanath's fiery speech on Friday was aimed at the Trust office bearers, many of whom have an RSS background
- The resignation of Champat Rai surprised many as he had the backing of VHP and RSS
- The Centre had named the Trust members

Don't defame Ayodhya: Yogi targets Cong, SP

LUCKNOW, DHNS & PTI: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday cautioned against what he termed attempts to "defame" Ayodhya and said that those "playing" with the faith of the people would not be spared under any circumstances.

"We acted immediately after receiving the SIT report," Adityanath said, addressing a gathering in Deoria, apparently referring to the arrest of eight of the nine accused in connection with the alleged embezzlement of cash offerings at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Attacking the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress leaders, Adityanath said these were the people who denied the very existence of Lord Rama and put up lawyers in the court against the Ram Temple movement.

"These people are now saying that the faith of the devotees has been betrayed... You (SP, Congress) will now teach us about faith... You never allowed Kanwar Yatra, used to ban Shree Krishna birth celebrations and opened fire on the kar sevaks in Ayodhya," he added.

Pune murder accused deleted chats: Police

PUNE, PTI & DHNS: The investigation into the murder of 25-year-old realtor Ketan Agarwal has intensified after police discovered that the accused, Siya Goyal and Chetan Chaudhary, systematically wiped their entire phone chat history and recycle bins before and after the crime, officials said on Friday.

"During our investigation, it was revealed that both the accused deleted their chats before June 18 and after the Lohagad incident from their phones. The chats were deleted from the recycle bins of their respective phones," police said.

'Throw from the same cliff'

Siya Goyal's parents, Pravin and Pooja, said that if their daughter is found guilty, she should be thrown off the same cliff.

"... Let the investigation take place. ...If my daughter is involved, she should also be thrown off from (Lohagad Fort)... I want a proper investigation and the guilty to be punished," Pravin said.

Siya's mother, Pooja, said: "If my daughter is guilty, she should be thrown from the same place...we are clear on that."

IN BRIEF

Air force officer held in Rs 1.51-cr robbery case

▸ **AHMEDABAD, DHNS:** The Ahmedabad police have arrested an air force officer from New Delhi in connection with an armed robbery of Rs 1.51 crore. The Khadia police in Ahmedabad arrested Dipak Bhuker (31), who is originally from Haryana, on Thursday. Investigation revealed that he planned the robbery to raise money to repay loans he had incurred due to his addiction to cricket betting.

Adani case in US

▸ **NEW YORK, REUTERS:** A US judge on Friday ordered the Justice Department to justify its decision to drop criminal charges against Gautam Adani, declining to rule immediately on his lawyers' request earlier in the week to formally dismiss the case.

Flash floods

▸ **GUWAHATI, DHNS:** Flash floods have wreaked havoc in Arunachal Pradesh's keyi Paynor district, paralysing life in several parts. The four persons, who went missing on Wednesday, remained untraceable. Rescue teams continued search operations while the administration struggled to restore communication.

NDRF personnel trek to reach stranded people in Arunachal Pradesh.

Car security

▸ **NEW DELHI, DHNS:** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has proposed a phased rollout of advanced cybersecurity and vehicle management systems to significantly enhance the safety and security of automobiles manufactured in India.

Cong rejig sees new leaders in UP, Haryana

More changes in the offing, including in states like TN, Kerala

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Congress on Friday kick-started its organisational revamp by replacing Avinash Pande as in-charge of poll-bound Uttar Pradesh with Dalit leader Rajendra Pal Gautam, besides finding in senior leader Sanjay Dutt a replacement for B K Hariprasad in Haryana after the latter became the party's Karnataka-unit chief.

The party also appointed Seva Dal chief organiser Lalji Desai as the new Odisha in-charge in place of Ajay Kumar Lallu, who will now concentrate on his home state of UP, where polls are due next year.

Former Youth Congress president B V Srinivas also has a new assignment: the new chief organiser of the Seva Dal.

Sources said this was the first instalment of appointments, and more are in the offing, including new in-charges and presidents for states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The surprise in the first list is the change in Uttar Pradesh, where Gautam — a former AAP leader and Delhi Minister who currently heads the Congress' SC wing — is to steer the party as its central leadership's representative, with less than eight months left for polls there.

Incidentally, Gautam recently triggered unease in the party when he and a few other leaders met BSP leader Mayawati at her residence for an "impromptu courtesy visit" and faced a show-cause notice from the Congress.

Having close relationships with Dalit leaders and organisations, the 58-year-old is expected to play a significant role in the Congress' plan. One of his foremost challenges will be to ensure that the Congress does not lose in the seat-sharing discussions with the Samajwadi Party.

Gautam's appointment, a little over two months after the party issued the show-cause notice, is also being seen as a message on how the Congress plans to proceed with its allies as well as its outreach to "bahujans".

He will also be amplifying Rahul Gandhi's campaign of saving the Constitution.

TOP CHANGES

- Dalit leader Rajendra Pal Gautam replaces Avinash Pande as in-charge of poll-bound Uttar Pradesh
- Senior leader Sanjay Dutt replaces B K Hariprasad in Haryana
- Seva Dal chief organiser Lalji Desai appointed new in-charge of Odisha in place of Ajay Kumar Lallu

Other appointments

Meanwhile, Desai's assignment in Odisha comes amid speculation about Lallu's deteriorating relationship with the Congress' Odisha-unit president Bhakta Charan Das.

For Desai, a Gandhi family loyalist, the priority will be to ensure peace in the state unit, where Das and his detractors are tussling.

Dutt, an MLC in Maharashtra and an AICC secretary, will be in the hot seat in Haryana, where the central leadership is looking to manage senior leaders and usher in younger ones.

After earning praise for his work during the Covid-19 pandemic, Srinivas now has an organisational responsibility in the Seva Dal with a mandate to make it proactive.

War Memorial honour for Operation Sindoor soldiers

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

A year after Operation Sindoor, India has officially released the names of six soldiers — five from the Indian Army and one from the Indian Air Force — who were killed in action during the 88-hour-long conflict with Pakistan.

The men who made the supreme sacrifices are Subedar Major Pawan Kumar from 10 Infantry Brigade; Rifleman Sunil Kumar from the 4th Battalion, Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment; Lance Naik Dinesh Kumar from 5 Field Regiment; Agniveer Mood Murali Nayak from 851 Light Regiment; Havildar Sunil Kumar Singh from 237 Field Workshop and Sergeant Surendra Kumar from the IAF's 39 Wing.

Their names will be inscribed in the National War Memorial near the India Gate along with 10 others who made the supreme sacrifice while participating in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in 2025.

Indian Army launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year in response to the Pahelgam terror attack with coordinated missile and drone strikes against nine terror-linked sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The operation targeted the training infrastructure of two terrorist groups, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba, while avoiding civilian infrastructure.

On the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor last month, top military commanders said it was aimed at ceasing hostilities with Pakistan on India's own terms without locking the country in a long-drawn conflict.

A woman mourns during a procession on the occasion of Muharram, in Kolkata, West Bengal, on Friday. PTI

'States fund 90% of social spending as Centre's share falls'

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

State governments now account for nearly 90% of India's total social sector spending, while the Centre's share has declined sharply from 23.6% in 2008-09 to just 8.5% in 2024-25, according to a report released on Friday.

The report, titled 'Realising Rights: A Handbook of Welfare in India', highlights that governments collectively spend around 7% of GDP and 21% of total public expenditure on key welfare sectors and schemes.

The report was prepared by the Centre for the Study of the Indian Economy (CSIE) of Azim Premji University.

Despite this, public spending on critical areas remains below policy targets. Expenditure on education continues to hover around 4% of GDP, while spending on health stays below 2% of GDP, the report said.

The study notes that rights-based interventions have significantly expanded the reach of welfare programmes across the country. Following Supreme Court orders, the number of anganwadi centres rose from 6 lakh to 14 lakh. The National Food Security Act (NFSA) expanded subsidised foodgrain coverage from 36.3 crore to more than 81 crore people.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) continues to generate 200–300 crore person-days of employment annually, with women accounting for over 55% of the total employment generated.

The report also observes that the rapid expansion of cash transfer programmes is reshaping welfare delivery. However, increasing digitisation is creating new challenges related to exclusion errors and accountability.

"Adequate fiscal commitment, conducive institutional architecture and a human-centred mode of governance are critical for effective realisation of a rights-based welfare state," the report said.

Indu Prasad, President, Azim Premji University, said the report aims to contribute to informed public dialogue and strengthen collective efforts towards building a more equitable and inclusive India.

TN minister in 'drugs' row says he is innocent

CHENNAI, DHNS: Tamil Nadu Human Resources Minister D Sarath Kumar was at the centre of a row on Friday after an old video of him handling a powder-like substance during an IPL match surfaced on social media.

D Sarath Kumar

Many suspected the powder-like substance to be narcotics. In the video, the minister is seen handling a powder-like substance with an ATM card and a Rs 500 note.

However, Kumar responded with a video, claiming that what he handled was a mere tablet.

The minister said he had gone to watch an IPL match at the M A Chidambaram Stadium here a couple of years ago with his family. "My daughter developed a cold, and the doctor advised that she take a tablet in powder form. I crushed the tablet and gave it to her," he said.

"The video is now being shared with a malicious intention," he said.

Despite rise in arrests and cases, drug seizures dipped in 2025

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Drug law enforcement agencies across India seized 1,240.9 tonnes of drugs valued at around Rs 18,227 crore in 2025 — less than what they did the previous year — despite a rise in the number of cases and arrests by at least 50%, with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) pointing to traffickers adopting a decentralised supply mechanism.

The NCB also said cocaine and synthetic drugs may represent just 1% of the seizures, but their high potency and rapid market expansion present a critical challenge to the enforcement agencies. It indicated that the drug ban by the Taliban in 2022 led to a reduction of opium production in Afghanistan by 93%, but pre-existing stockpiles of 13,200 tonnes will sustain supply in 2026.

According to the NCB 2025 annual report released on Friday, last year saw 1.48 lakh drug trafficking cases, up from 96,930 cases, in which 1.83 lakh people, including 747 foreigners, as against 1.22 lakh in 2024, were arrested.

The Drug Story in Numbers

Between 2021 and 2025, law enforcement agencies have seized over 6,800 tonnes of drugs valued at around Rs 1.08 lakh crore

Year	Cases	Arrests	Seizures (in Tonnes)	Value (in Rs)
2021	68,144	93,538	1,609.6	25,241 cr
2022	75,727	1,26,516	1,253.6	19,992
2023	78,307	1,32,954	1,389.7	17,178
2024	96,930	1,22,224	1,330.6	27,524
2025	1,48,063	1,83,675	1,240.9	18,227
TOTAL	4,67,171	6,58,907	6,824.4	1,08,162

The seizure, however, was less last year compared to 1,330.6 tonnes in 2024, valued at Rs 27,524 crore.

Cannabis highest

Cannabis — ganja, hashish and hashish oil — topped the list of seizures at 633.59 tonnes, a rise from 540.8 tonnes in 2024, though it has not touched a high of 816.9 tonnes achieved in 2021.

Opiates — heroin, opium, morphine, codeine and poppy straw — accounted for 361.42 tonnes or 29%, pharmaceutical drugs accounting for 237.29 tonnes (19%) and Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS), cocaine, controlled substances and synthetic drugs 8.57 tonnes or (1%).

Ganja alone accounted for 628.19 tonnes of seizures, an increase from 533.9 tonnes in 2024, indicating an "expansion" in enforcement coverage. In contrast, hashish seizures declined from 6.48 tonnes in 2024 to 5.11 tonnes last year, indicating "either reduced detection or a possible shift in trafficking patterns within the cannabis segment", it said.

The report highlighted a "clear divergence" between volume and number of cases involving heroin seizure — seizure declined from 7,197 kg in 2021 to 3,567 kg in 2025, though it rose from 2,596 kg in 2024 — while cases rose from 12,634 to 36,793.

Call south CMs' meet on linking rivers: PMK to PM

CHENNAI, DHNS: Welcoming the recent consensus among Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana on sharing river water, PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss on Friday nudged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to convene a conference of chief ministers from south India to expedite the Cauvery-Godavari river interlinking project.

Anbumani's statement assumes significance, as it comes when Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are fighting over the latter's proposal to build a reservoir in Mekedatu across the River Cauvery. The Tamil Nadu Assembly had last week passed a unanimous resolution urging the Union government not to grant any permission to the Karnataka government to go ahead with the project.

US should clarify its mediation role in Ukraine war, says Russia

MOSCOW, REUTERS: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on Friday for "clarification" of the US role in trying to end the war in Ukraine.

In written answers to media questions, Lavrov escalated an argument with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio about whether Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump had reached an understanding on the outlines of a peace deal when they met in Alaska last year.

Russia says there was indeed such an understanding, which it has often referred to as "the spirit of Anchorage".

But Rubio, speaking to reporters on Thursday, denied that any agreement was reached.

"There was a proposal in Alaska, but there was no agreement in Alaska. If there had been an agreement, we would have had an end of the war," Rubio said.

Lavrov, in response, laid out the most detailed version yet of what took place at the summit last August.

He said Putin went through a series of US proposals that Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff had brought to Moscow days earlier, listing them point by point and checking with Witkoff — who was present at the summit along with Trump and Rubio — that he, Putin, had noted them correctly.

Lavrov, who was also at the meeting, said Witkoff had answered each time in the affirmative.

Trump slams Iran drone attack as 'foolish' ceasefire violation

Tehran defends role in managing Hormuz traffic following attack on tanker

WASHINGTON, AFP/REUTERS/ NYT NEWS SERVICE

US President Donald Trump on Friday slammed Iran for carrying out a drone attack in the Strait of Hormuz, calling it a "foolish" violation of the ceasefire in the West Asia war.

"One of the drones solidly hit the upper deck of a large and very expensive cargo-carrying ship," while three others were shot down, Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, in an apparent reference to an attack on a vessel the previous day.

"Obviously, this is a foolish violation of our ceasefire agreement," Trump added.

The British maritime security agency UKMTO announced on Thursday that a cargo ship in the strait was "hit on the starboard side by an unknown projectile, causing damage to the bridge", but reported no casualties. It said the incident occurred just 7.5 nautical miles (14 km) off Oman's coast.

The secretary-general of the UN's International Maritime Organization, Arsenio Dominguez, then announced the suspension of efforts to evacuate some 600 ships and 11,000 sailors trapped in the Gulf by the war, which was launched by the US and Israel on February 28. A ceasefire took effect on April 8, but sporadic violence has continued in the Gulf region.

Meanwhile, Iran reaffirmed on Friday its claim to being a central authority in managing traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a day after its forces struck a container vessel there, temporarily halting shipping through the critical waterway.

The strike on the vessel, the Ever Lovely, a container ship that was passing near the Omani side of the strait, appeared to be the first known Iranian attack on a commercial vessel since the signing of a preliminary peace agreement between Tehran and Washington last week. It laid bare the challenges to restoring pre-war levels of traffic through the strait.

Iran has fired at least four one-way attack drones at ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, Trump said on Friday, adding that one of the drones hit the upper deck of a cargo ship. "Damage was done, but the ship was able to proceed on its way. We knocked down three other drones. Obviously, this is a foolish violation of our ceasefire agreement," Trump said.

Oil tanker Al Shaffiah sails near the Omani coast along the route prescribed by the United Nations, on Friday. REUTERS

Missile alert startles Dubai

Authorities in the UAE sounded an incoming missile alert on Friday for Dubai before quickly telling the public to "disregard the previous warning" and later saying it was triggered by a technical malfunction, AP/PTI reports from Dubai. The mobile phone alert startled many across the city-state of Dubai, the first such alert since the US and Iran last week reached an interim ceasefire in the war.

Israel, Lebanon sign US-backed framework agreement

WASHINGTON, AP/PTI: Secretary of State Marco Rubio, along with the ambassadors of Israel and Lebanon, announced a framework agreement on Friday that was described as a first step towards peace following months of conflict between Israel and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah.

The officials did not share details of the agreement, which was signed by Yechiel Leiter, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, and Nada Hamadeh, Lebanon's ambassador to the United States. Hamadeh said the framework "is a first step on the road to restoring Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity, securing a permanent and final cessation of hostilities, enabling our people to go back to their land and allowing all Lebanese to live in peace, security and prosperity".

Leiter said the final destination of the framework was peace between the two countries.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

People take photos as they attend a destruction ceremony of illegal drugs to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Yangon on Friday. AFP

Small aircraft crashes into Beijing's tallest skyscraper

▶ A light sport aircraft crashed into Beijing's tallest skyscraper, the Citic Tower, on Friday, prompting evacuations, PTI reports from Beijing.

It was not immediately clear whether the crash caused any casualties or how many people were on board the aircraft, debris from which was scattered across Beijing's central business district. The origin of the plane and the circumstances leading to the crash are not yet known. Officials have not yet commented on the incident. Posts about the crash were quickly removed from Chinese social media. Videos posted on social media showed the aircraft striking the upper floors of the 528-metre (1,732-foot) tower, with chunks of wreckage falling onto the surrounding pavement and green space. Additional footage showed occupants being evacuated from the building, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. A woman, identified by her surname Lin, told the Post she had been urgently evacuated from the building at 6 pm. "I ran out without my ID card or bag," she said.

Ex-Meta executive sues company

▶ A former Meta executive whose memoir, "Careless People", provides an explosive insider account of her time at the social media giant has sued the company for attempting to "silence" her, AP/PTI reports from New York.

The lawsuit, filed on Thursday in federal court in Northern California, claims the tech giant's private arbitration order barring her from speaking about the company or promoting her bestselling book is invalid. It also argues that the severance agreement she signed when she left Meta was made under duress. Sarah Wynn-Williams served as director of global public policy at Facebook, now operating under parent company Meta Platforms Inc, from 2011 until 2017. "Careless People" alleges cruel behaviour by CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other executives.

Xi backs B'desh in 'rejecting foreign interference'

China proposes deeper economic and strategic cooperation

BEIJING, PTI

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday expressed Beijing's backing for Bangladesh in upholding its sovereignty and "rejecting foreign interference" as he met visiting Prime Minister Tarique Rahman here.

Xi also voiced Beijing's support for Rahman's government, which took office in February, and said China stands ready to work with Bangladesh to carry out high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and further align development strategies, according to a press release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Tarique Rahman arrives for a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Friday. REUTERS

China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative aims to connect Asia, Africa and Europe through a vast network of railways, ports, highways and energy pipelines, essentially reviving an ancient trade route. "China supports Bangladesh in upholding national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and rejecting foreign interference," Xi told Rahman, who wrapped up his five-day China visit on Friday. "No matter how the world changes, China will not waver in its commitment to the overall direction of China-Bangladesh friendly relations," he said.

Xi also proposed the establishment of an economic corridor linking Bangladesh, Myanmar and China, aimed at further deepening regional connectivity and trade.

China supports the China-Myanmar-Bangladesh Economic Corridor for greater regional connectivity, Xi said.

The new corridor is a condensed version of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor, proposed by Beijing in 2013, which failed to take off.

Rahman chose Malaysia for his first foreign visit after assuming office.

India among 35 nations to back US-led AI supply chain initiative

WASHINGTON, PTI

Thirty-five nations, including India, have signed on to a US initiative to build trusted and resilient supply chains to power artificial intelligence (AI) technologies.

At the second Pax Silica Summit held in Washington on Thursday, 35 nations signed the Joint Statement on AI Opportunity, aligning behind a pro-growth, pro-innovation regulatory approach for the AI era, Jacob Helberg, US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, said.

"It is a commitment to trusted supply chains, to mobilising the private sector, and to the infrastructure that will power the next century," he said.

Argentina, Germany, the Netherlands, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Kazakhstan, Panama and the European Union joined the Pax Silica initiative on the sidelines of the summit.

India was represented at the summit by S Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; Nagraj Naidu, Additional Secretary (Americas) in the Ministry of External Affairs; and representatives of Indian industry.

The Indian delegation engaged with other governments and industry representatives on advancing collaboration in semiconductors, artificial intelligence and resilient technology supply chains.

"The future of AI will not be determined by who regulates first. It will be determined by who builds first and builds the most capacity. More energy. More compute. More chips. More talent. More builders. A future where we accelerate innovation and private investment is welcomed," Helberg said.

Trump foe Bolton pleads guilty in classified files case

WASHINGTON, AFP: John Bolton, who served as Donald Trump's national security advisor before becoming an outspoken critic of the US president, pleaded guilty on Friday to one count of retaining classified documents.

Asked by federal judge Theodore Chuang if he was guilty, the 77-year-old veteran diplomat replied: "I am, Your Honour, and I'm sorry for it." Bolton, who faces a maximum prison sentence of five years, must also pay a $2.25 million fine and forfeit his federal pension as part of a plea agreement.

Sentencing was set for October 28.

"As Mr Bolton admitted, he shared more than 1,000 pages of information about his day-to-day activities as the NSA, including information related to national defence, with two individuals," prosecutor Kelly Hayes said after the hearing.

A South African immigration officer holds a Malawian infant born from an undocumented migrants mother in Pietermaritzburg on Friday. AFP

South Africa to deport Malawians

▶ Thousands of Malawians were awaiting clearance in makeshift encampments in South Africa on Friday as tension mounted before an unofficial June 30 ultimatum for undocumented migrants to leave the country, AFP reports from Durban.

Citizen-led groups have rallied behind the unauthorised Tuesday deadline after weeks of protests, attacks on businesses and threats against illegal migrants in which two Mozambican nationals and a Malawian have been killed. Malawians were gathered in centres in grim conditions in the southeastern cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg awaiting buses for 2,000-km journey to their country, AFP reporters said. Conditions at these makeshift camps had become "untenable", Justice Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi said.

Japan PM Takaichi to visit India

▶ Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi will undertake a three-day visit to India next week to explore ways to expand bilateral ties in a range of areas including trade, investment and defence, PTI reports from New Delhi.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Takaichi will be on an official visit to New Delhi from July 1 to 3 for the 16th India-Japan annual summit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. "The Summit will provide an opportunity for both sides to review and strengthen the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation as well as exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," it said.

Singapore to help abandoned Indian workers find jobs

SINGAPORE, PTI: Job placements for more than 400 migrant workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, linked to a case of alleged abandonment by companies owned by an Indian national, will begin next week, Singapore's main labour organisation said on Friday.

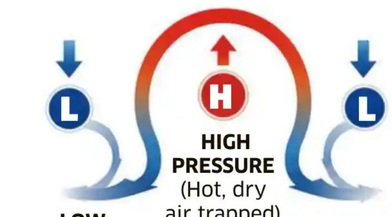
The workers were hired by three firms with a common director who is believed to have fled the country without paying them for several months. "On jobs, we have received interest from over 80 companies with close to 400 vacancies, and our unions are sending in more referrals," National Trades Union Congress Secretary-General Ng Chee Meng said in a social media post.

He further said that the organisation, along with the NGO Migrant Workers' Centre, would relocate the migrant workers to a single lodging facility by this weekend. Ng added that the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management was at Tuas View Dormitory, where the migrant workers are currently accommodated, to help the remaining workers file their claims directly.

Omega Block causing Europe's intense heatwave

A weather pattern called an "Omega Block" is trapping hot air over Western Europe, fuelling an **intense heatwave that has contributed to more than 50 deaths in France.**

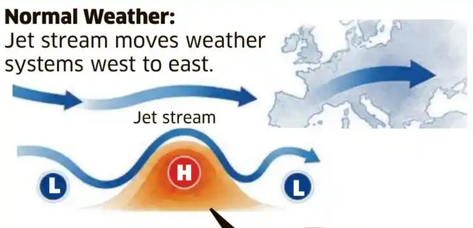
Why is it called an Omega Block?



"The weather pattern resembles the Greek letter Omega (Ω), with a dome of warm high pressure trapped between two low-pressure systems."

How it forms

Normal Weather: Jet stream moves weather systems west to east.



Omega Block:
1: Jet stream buckles north and south.
2: High-pressure system becomes isolated.
3: Weather pattern stalls.
4: Hot air remains trapped over the same region.

IS CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSIBLE?

WHAT SCIENTISTS AGREE ON

1 Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of heatwaves.

2 Earth has warmed about 1.4°C since pre-industrial times.

3 Higher baseline temperatures make heatwaves severe.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN OMEGA BLOCK?

HIGH PRESSURE ZONE
1 Clear skies
2 Rising temperatures
3 Little wind
4 Dry conditions

France & Spain
40°C +

LOW PRESSURE ZONE
1: More cloud cover
2: Rainfall **3:** Little wind
4: Cooler temperatures

Example
Parts of northern and western Britain

Trump threatens 100% tariff over digital services tax

WASHINGTON, AFP: US President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to impose a 100% tariff on European countries that levy a digital services tax, adding that existing trade deals would be scrapped.

"Any country that imposes such a Tax will immediately be met with a 100% TARIFF on any and all Goods sent to the United States of America," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform, adding that "this TARIFF will supersede Trade Deals made with the Country, whether implemented, signed, or not."

The move comes just a day after EU countries gave the green light to a trade agreement negotiated last year with the US, which caps taxes on European imports at 15%. But Trump has repeatedly made it clear that he wants to tackle so-called non-tariff barriers to trade, and strict European regulations on technology and the environment are in his crosshairs. For the US president, those rules hinder US exports.

Earlier this month, Trump threatened to impose a 100% tariff on French wine and champagne unless Paris removed its digital services tax on technology firms.

France imposed a 3% levy in 2019 on the revenues earned within the country's borders by technology firms, including US giants Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Google's parent company, Alphabet.

Oz plans tougher social media ban for kids

MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA), AP/PTI: The Australian government plans to strengthen laws that ban children younger than 16 from social media platforms, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Friday.

Observers said on Friday that the government was responding to evidence suggesting the ban on children holding accounts on platforms including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube had failed since it came into force on December 10 last year.

Australia was the first country in the world to pass legislation keeping young people off social media, but others have since followed.

Singer Melanie Martinez performs in New York City on Thursday. REUTERS

Biz Bytes

Foxconn ups investment in India unit

NEW DELHI, PTI: Electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn has infused $37.2 million, or around Rs 351 crore, in its India arm Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development Private Limited, through its Singapore-based subsidiary, said a regulatory filing.

With the latest transaction, Foxconn Singapore's cumulative stake in the Chennai-based subsidiary has increased to 99.99% at a valuation of $2.82 billion or about Rs 26,600 crore.

Fidelity buys 2% stake in Lodha

NEW DELHI, PTI: US-based financial services company Fidelity Investments has purchased a 2% stake in Lodha Developers for Rs 1,864 crore from two promoter entities through open market transactions, according to block deal data on the NSE.

US-based Fidelity Investments, through its eight affiliates, bought a total of 1,98,81,296 shares, or 1.99% stake, in Lodha Developers

Fractal Analytics gets new CPO

BENGALURU, DHNS: Enterprise AI company Fractal Analytics has appointed Leandro DalleMule as Chief Practice Officer (CPO), Financial Services & Insurance (FSI). He will be responsible for the FSI practice globally, driving strategy, client success, industry innovation and AI-led transformation for financial institutions and insurers. He will also play a role in strengthening Fractal's strategic partnerships. DalleMule said his priority is to deepen client partnerships, drive growth across key accounts and build an operating model that delivers outcome-driven impact.

ED finds no discrepancies, claims Rajesh Exports

BENGALURU, DHNS: Rajesh Exports Ltd said on Friday that no discrepancies were found in inventory or cash after search operations conducted by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) at its premises, and that no valuable items were seized.

In a stock exchange filing dated June 26, the company said officials fully cooperated with authorities and shared all details sought during the search.

The filing came after Indian stock exchanges on Wednesday sought clarification from the gold jewellery firm following reports that the ED had conducted search and seizure operations at its Bengaluru and Mumbai premises under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.

In a press release issued on Wednesday, ED said its investigation found missing records relating to foreign transactions, including imports, exports, overseas investments and settlement of trade receivables and payables.

The agency said records supporting a claimed investment of Rs 1,035 crore in African mines "were neither found nor provided by the company as yet."

ED also alleged "opaque netting / set-offs" of about Rs 3,000 crore in foreign trade receivables and payables involving overseas entities. Further investigation is underway.

'25% of tech services firms move AI experiments to production'

Nasscom says challenge to make AI work in complex environments

BENGALURU, DHNS

Nearly 25% of technology services companies have transitioned AI experiments into production, and the industry is generating an estimated $10-12 billion in AI services revenue, with more than 2 million professionals skilled in artificial intelligence and 100,000-200,000 trained in advanced capabilities, according to industry body Nasscom.

It also said that around 85% of technology service providers now have agentic AI platforms. As enterprises move beyond pilots, the real challenge will be to make AI work in complex operating environments.

The Nasscom US CEO Forum was held at the Consulate General of India, New York City, where Ravi Kumar S, Chair of the Forum, said, "The next phase of AI is not about experimentation alone. Enterprises now need to convert AI capability into production value. That requires data readiness, workflow redesign, secure deployment, governance and change management. These are areas where Indian technology services companies have deep experience and a strong opportunity to lead."

The technology services sector in India will continue to remain

central to the transformation of global enterprises in the AI era. AI does not reduce the relevance of technology services; it changes how services are delivered and scaled, while expanding the addressable opportunity across enterprise modernisation, data, AI governance and intelligent operations, top executives said at the forum.

They emphasised that the impact of AI on technology services cannot be assessed only through the lens of task automation. While AI will bring productivity gains and compress parts of standardised, repeatable work, it will also expand demand for technology orchestration, data readiness, application modernisation, AI governance, cybersecurity, agent management and industry-specific solutions.

Rajesh Nambiar, President Nasscom, said, "For more than three decades, Indian technology services companies have helped global enterprises navigate major technology shifts. That rationale for enterprise technology partnerships remains strong in the AI era. Companies will continue to focus on their core businesses and will need specialist partners to deploy and scale AI responsibly. As AI moves into production, enterprises will have to bring together models, applications, data platforms, cloud environments, cybersecurity controls, regulatory requirements and industry systems into a reliable operating model. The value of IT services will increasingly lie in making these systems work together securely, efficiently and at scale."

Agentic AI is expected to open $300-400 billion in additional addressable spend pools for technology services by 2030 across data for AI, legacy modernisation, agentic workflows, AI operations, cybersecurity and AI governance. India is strongly placed for this transition. The sector brings global delivery maturity, deep enterprise technology capability, a large AI-skilled workforce, strong domain expertise and a growing ecosystem across AI platforms, startups, GCCs and sovereign AI solutions.

India's technology services sector has navigated multiple enterprise technology shifts over the last three decades. Future growth will be less-dependent on linear headcount addition and more dependent on platforms, domain solutions, proprietary assets, intelligent operations, governance frameworks and outcome-based delivery, the industry body added.

Goldman Sachs raises GDP growth forecast for 2026 to 6.8%

Lowers projections on current account deficit, inflation

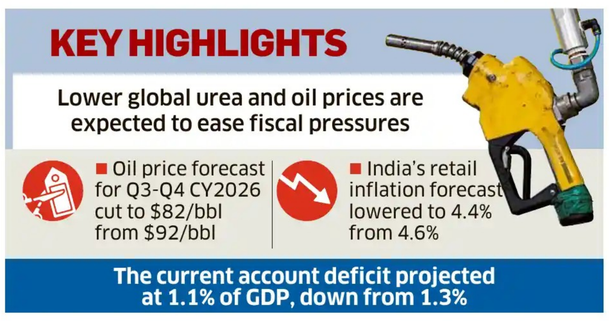
GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Goldman Sachs on Friday raised India's economic growth forecast for the 2026 calendar year to 6.8%, up 30 basis points from its earlier projection, citing lower oil prices and easing supply disruptions after the US-Iran peace deal.

The New York-based brokerage also expects the numbers to improve on inflation and current account deficit. It has lowered India's retail inflation projection for the current year to 4.4%, which is 20 basis points or 0.2 percentage point lower than its earlier estimate.

India's current account deficit, according to Goldman Sachs, is likely to be 1.1% of GDP this year, which is 0.2 percentage points lower from its earlier projection.

"With the recent downward revision in the oil price forecast by our commodities team ($82/bbl average in Q3-Q4 CY26, vs $92/bbl earlier and $75/bbl average in CY27, vs $80/bbl earlier), we raise our real GDP growth forecast for CY26 by 0.3pp to 6.8% YoY, lower our headline inflation forecast by 0.2pp to 4.4% YoY and lower our current account deficit forecast by 0.2pp to 1.1% of GDP," Goldman Sachs said in a report.


KEY HIGHLIGHTS
Lower global urea and oil prices are expected to ease fiscal pressures
Oil price forecast for Q3-Q4 CY2026 cut to $82/bbl from $92/bbl
India's retail inflation forecast lowered to 4.4% from 4.6%
The current account deficit projected at 1.1% of GDP, down from 1.3%

India's GDP expanded by 7.8% in the January-March quarter.

In its latest monetary policy review, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has pegged April-June quarter growth at 6.6%. In the July-September period, it is estimated to grow at 6.3%, and in October-December 2026, by 6.5%. For the full FY2026-27, the RBI estimates the economy to grow by 6.6%, which is lower than the previous year's 7.7%.

Goldman Sachs' projection for the 2026 GDP growth is largely in line with the RBI's estimate.

The brokerage expects that the correction in global commodity prices could ease fiscal pressure. "The sharp correction in global urea prices should reduce upside risk to the fertiliser subsidy bill versus our earlier expectations," it said.

"Recent import tenders have cleared well-below the highs seen during the peak of the Middle East shock, and together with lower oil prices, should help ease near-term fiscal pressures," it added.

Meanwhile, in its latest Economy Watch report, EY India said India's GDP growth is likely to be in the range of 6.6-6.8% in the current financial year. It has pegged the headline retail inflation at 4.5%, fiscal deficit at 4.4% and current account deficit at 1.5% of GDP.

The report, authored by EY India Chief Policy Advisor DK Srivastava, noted that a gradual normalisation of global energy markets is expected to ease supply-side pressures, improve cost conditions, and support both growth and inflation outcomes during FY27.

Bitcoin leads investing across Indian cities, says CoinDCX

Digital currency under pressure after falling below $60,000 mark

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

With 22.43% market dominance, Bitcoin leads investing across every major city in the country, says crypto exchange CoinDCX in its latest report. Bitcoin's share of the global crypto market rose to 58.2%, while BTC emerged as the most-held digital asset across every major Indian city and demographic cohort on the exchange. At the same time, meme tokens lost prominence, accounting for just 12.17% of trading volume, compared with 32.87% for Layer-1 assets, it added.

The findings come amid one of the most complex macroeconomic environments in recent years, marked by interest-rate uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, and heightened volatility across global asset classes.

The average age of CoinDCX investors is 30-31 years during H1 2026. The 30-45 age cohort expanded its share of the investor base from 36% to 38%. This cohort typically represents investors with higher disposable income, longer investment horizons, and more structured portfolio allocation strategies, said CoinDCX, which has crossed 2.2 crore registered users.

Investor behaviour

CoinDCX Co-founder Sumit Gupta said, "The most-important takeaway from H1 2026 is not what happened to prices, it's what happened to investor behaviour. Indian investors are demonstrating greater discipline, longer-term thinking, and stronger conviction than we've seen in previous market cycles."

"Bitcoin's leadership across every city and age group, the rise of systematic investing during market corrections, and the shift toward utility-driven assets all point to the same conclusion that the country's crypto market is maturing. Investors are no longer participating on the sidelines of a trend; they are positioning around a long-term structural opportunity," he added.

Meanwhile, Bitcoin remains under pressure after falling below the $60,000 mark. On Friday evening, it was trading at $59,786.56.

Vikram Subburaj, Chief Executive Officer of Giottus.com, said that after beginning June above $73,000, the world's largest crypto asset has corrected sharply. This reflects a decisive shift towards risk aversion across global markets.

"Technically, Bitcoin is approaching an important inflection point. Immediate support lies near $58,200, followed by the $57,500-$58,000 zone where buyers are expected to emerge. On the upside, $60,000 remains the first resistance. A sustained move above $61,800-$62,000 would be required to signal that the recent correction is losing momentum. Until those levels are reclaimed, traders are likely to remain cautious," he said.

On-chain indicators suggest that the market is moving through a classic capitulation phase, he added.

WazirX said that higher inflation expectations and long liquidations weighed on sentiment, though the market continues to watch key support levels for signs of stability.

'VW CEO aims to cut up to 100k jobs in coming years'

BERLIN, REUTERS: Volkswagen CEO Oliver Blume aims to cut up to 100,000 jobs from the current workforce worldwide over the next few years and discontinue production at four of the group's German plants, *Manager Magazin* reported on Friday.

Oliver Blume

The German magazine also said Blume intends to reduce investment by around 15% to just over €130 billion ($148 billion) over the next five years.

A Volkswagen spokesperson said the company would not comment on confidential documents. "The relevant facts of the matter will be discussed and approved by the relevant bodies. We will not preempt this process," he said in an emailed statement.

"The entire group, including its brands and subsidiaries, must undergo far-reaching change," the spokesperson said.

Manager Magazin said Blume and the group's CFO, Arno Antlitz, aim to completely restructure the company, citing sources. Volkswagen's namesake core VW brand and the parts-manufacturing plants would be spun off from the current group structure and incorporated into separate entities, the report said.

Over the medium term, VW is planning to close its production facilities in Hanover, Zwickau and Emden, as well as a plant of sister brand Audi in Neckarsulm, all located in Germany, the magazine said, with production to be discontinued once the models currently manufactured there are phased out.

Blume previously has vowed to ramp up cost-cutting on top of 50,000 job cuts under way, with under-used plants in Germany under the spotlight despite a 2024 deal with unions guaranteeing no plant closures this decade. Volkswagen, like its German and European peers, is under pressure from tariffs, Chinese competition and the costly shift to electric vehicles.

Global rating agencies unfair to India: Goyal

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Global rating agencies S&P, Moody's and Fitch have been unfair in recognising India's economic fundamentals and potential, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday.

Piyush Goyal

"I can say it on record that they have been unfair to India. They have not recognised the India growth story, strong fundamentals, and sovereign capabilities," Goyal said at an event in London.

"I will not cast any motives to it, but I do express surprise," the minister added, remarking that India's domestic analytics firm CareEdge has been more objective in assessments and ratings of other countries.

He claimed that CareEdge has assessed several economies weaker than India more fairly than the global agencies. Goyal stressed the need for greater transparency and objectivity in the ratings process. Most global agencies have placed India's sovereign ratings at the bottom edge of the investment-grade threshold.

Uber India outgoing head to join OpenAI as India MD

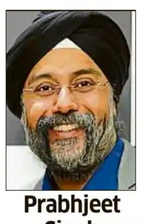
UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Uber India and South Asia's outgoing president, Prabhjeet Singh, will join OpenAI as its India Managing Director in September. He will report to Kiran Mani, Managing Director for APAC.

Singh will be OpenAI's senior-most leader in India, with responsibility for its performance across consumer growth, enterprise adoption and partnerships, regulatory engagement, and operations.

OpenAI has confirmed the development to *DH* and said his focus will include building partnerships and supporting the country's wider AI ecosystem, while helping more consumers, businesses, institutions and government bodies benefit from AI. The appointment is part of OpenAI's continued investment in India, and the country is one of the top-priority markets for the company.

Singh most-recently served as President of Uber India and South Asia, where he led its mobility business across India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. He stepped down after close to 11 years with the ride-hailing firm. An Uber spokesperson said, "India is one of Uber's most-important markets globally, an important driver of innovation and long-term growth. The strength of our business today reflects the incredible team and foundation built over the years. We thank Prabhjeet for his leadership and lasting contributions in his decade-long journey with Uber."


Prabhjeet Singh

Singh joined the ride-hailing firm in 2015 from McKinsey & Company, where he served as an Associate Partner. He joined Uber as a head of strategy, and became director, head of cities and growth in 2018. Singh became President of India and South Asia in June 2020.

RAIN PAIN

Weak monsoon emerges as India's next economic worry, after oil

BLOOMBERG

A weak monsoon is emerging as India's next inflation risk, with a developing El Niño threatening to curb rainfall and push up food prices just as an easing oil relieves broader price pressures.

The southwest monsoon, which accounts for about 70% of India's annual rainfall, is vital for the $300 billion farm economy and has an outsized influence on food prices, rural demand and broader economic output.

"Bad rains bring bad sentiment, both in equity markets and rural spending," said Rajni Thakur, an economist at L&T Finance Ltd., which runs a rural loan book of over Rs 45,000 crore ($4.8 billion). "First comes inflation, then sentiment is hit, which leads to a cut in spending during the festive season."

Reserve Bank of India officials have said they are closely monitoring the weather to assess the inflation outlook and stand ready to respond if price pressures broaden. The RBI left its key rate at 5.25% this month while maintaining a neutral stance with inflation comfortably within its 2-6% target range.

A 10% rain deficit could add as much as one-percentage-point to headline consumer inflation driven by food prices, according to research by Yuvika Singhal, an economist at QuantEco Research. India's cumulative rainfall was 43% below normal as of June 22.

In rural India, a delayed monsoon — which typically runs from June 1 to September 30 — rarely shows up first in official data. It appears instead in smaller fertilizer purchases, postponed

Farmers sow rice saplings in Sonepat, Haryana. BLOOMBERG

tractor bookings, fewer motorcycle inquiries and shopkeepers holding back inventory before festive season which kicks off in September.

The weakness then spreads beyond villages, weighing on broader consumption and growth.

In an interview this week, external member of the RBI's monetary policy committee Nagesh Kumar sought to calm nerves about weaker rainfall this year, saying agriculture has become less weather-dependent over time and that ample grain stocks provide a buffer against shortages.

On Wednesday, Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra too highlighted India's stockpile as a potential buffer.

Economists, however, caution that stockpiles can only partially offset a sustained weather-related hit to production.

"That buffer stock is for rice and wheat and not for pulses, oilseeds, coarse cereals," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Bank of Baroda.

"El Niño is a major concern not just for India, but for the entire world," he said. "We should not be in a state of denial. We import edible oils from Southeast Asia. Lack of rains will impact even those."

A delayed monsoon also risks extending into late September and October, disrupting harvest and damaging crops.

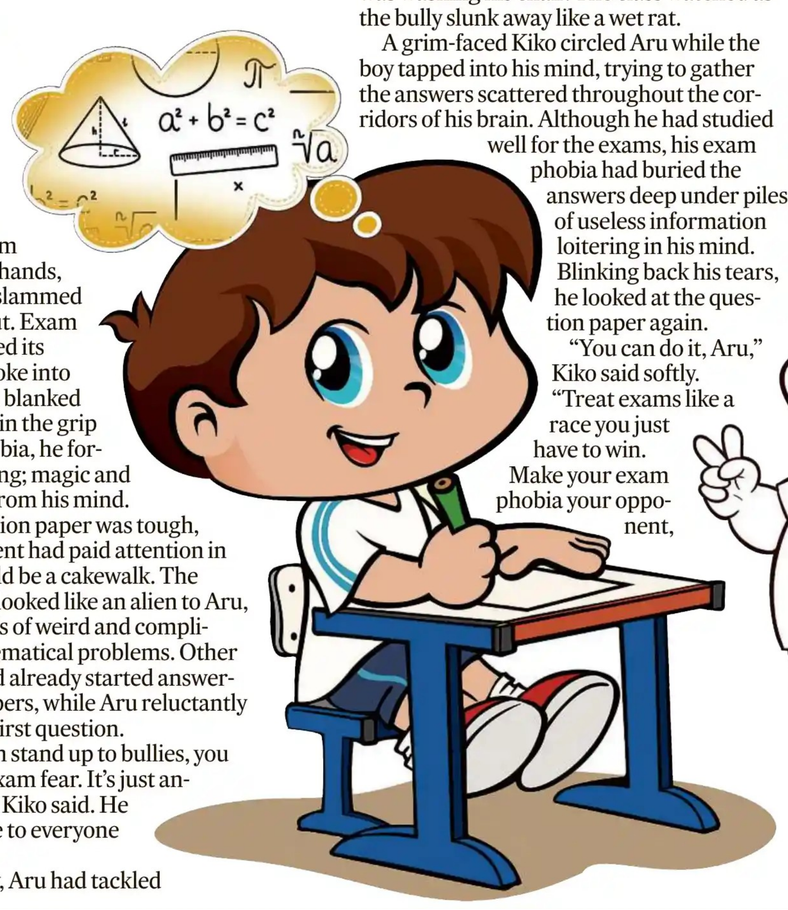
Sabnavis expects headline inflation to top 5.5% by October, near the upper ceiling of the central bank's target band, driven by food prices. Such an outcome could prompt the RBI to hike, marking its first increase since February 2023.

The government is trying to mitigate the impact by identifying 315 districts vulnerable to below-normal rainfall, including 111 high-priority areas with limited irrigation. Contingency plans will guide crop choices, water use and emergency measures across major agricultural states. The government is also stepping up coordination with states to protect crop production and rural incomes if dry conditions persist.

In 2023, a delayed monsoon and below-normal rainfall prompted New Delhi to curb rice exports in a bid to contain domestic prices, disrupting a market that relies on India for about 40% of global rice shipments. So far this year, there have been no signs of similar restrictions.

The Special MAGIC

Rachna Chhabria weaves an inspiring tale about overcoming exam fear



Aru wasn't a weak student, but just a very distracted one. His mind meandered everywhere during lessons, and when it returned to the classroom, some parts of the lessons had left him far behind. This, in turn, affected his performance during tests and exams. The bad grades further lowered his morale, and Aru also developed exam phobia.

But meeting Kiko, the magic spirit, had changed many things for Aru. They had met in a park, and the next day Kiko had landed inside his house and in his life. Kiko had taught Aru many magic spells. The spells had made Aru's distractive tendencies disappear, as he was scared of staring at any object for more than a few seconds, to avoid triggering a spell on it. Most of Aru's attention was now focused on his textbooks and on what the teachers were teaching.

All too soon, the first-term exams rolled into view. Unfortunately, the first paper was maths. The moment he held the exam paper in his hands, Aru's brain slammed its doors shut. Exam phobia reared its head. He broke into a sweat. Aru blanked out. Caught in the grip of exam phobia, he forgot everything; magic and Kiko faded from his mind.

The question paper was tough, but if a student had paid attention in class, it would be a cakewalk. The exam sheet looked like an alien to Aru, with all kinds of weird and complicated mathematical problems. Other students had already started answering their papers, while Aru reluctantly tackled the first question.

"If you can stand up to bullies, you can tackle exam fear. It's just another bully," Kiko said. He was invisible to everyone except Aru.

Yesterday, Aru had tackled the class bully. When Aru returned to the classroom after lunch, he saw that the bully had put his feet on Aru's chair. Aru had poured water on the bully's feet, saying he was washing his chair. The class watched as the bully slunk away like a wet rat.

A grim-faced Kiko circled Aru while the boy tapped into his mind, trying to gather the answers scattered throughout the corridors of his brain. Although he had studied well for the exams, his exam phobia had buried the answers deep under piles of useless information loitering in his mind. Blinking back his tears, he looked at the question paper again.

"You can do it, Aru," Kiko said softly. "Treat exams like a race you just have to win. Make your exam phobia your opponent, someone you can outrun. Start solving the problems."

Aru decided he would make his parents proud. He would conquer exam phobia. Picking up his pen, he re-read the first problem. An image of the solution to the mathematical problem appeared in his mind, like a bulb lighting up. Step by step, he solved the equation, arriving at the right answer. It was actually quite simple. He wondered why he hadn't started the paper earlier.

He glanced at the Mickey Mouse clock on the wall above the blackboard. It grinned at him, its hands running behind each other.

"Oh no..." Aru groaned. Only 25 minutes were left. Though he had solved the first seven problems, he was still slow, and at this pace, he would end up submitting a half-completed paper. He hadn't yet tackled the difficult questions. He looked at the clock again, willing it to move slowly.

He worked feverishly to complete the rest of the paper. "I can do this," Aru kept repeating. Maths was no longer a bully. He enjoyed the multiplications, took a shine to the subtractions, delved into the divisions and marvelled at the additions, with one eye on the clock. He found the square roots and the remainders with relative ease, finishing with eight seconds to spare.

The maths teacher, Mrs Maria Pinto, collected all the answer sheets. Mrs Pinto's eyes skimmed over one answer sheet. She blinked rapidly as her gaze slid down the sheaf of papers in her hands. Turning her eyes away from it, she stared at the students. Her eyes once again returned to the answer sheet in her hand and, lifting her red pen, she started correcting it.

"I don't believe it," she shook her head halfway through her correction.

All the students watched her silently, questions racing through their minds.

"Aru," she said, her eyes glued to the sheet.

"Yes, Ma'am," Aru said, his heart beating wildly. He hoped he wasn't getting a zero.

"I've been checking your answers. It looks like you are going to ace the paper," she smiled.

Aru's heart soared. He had won the maths race! He had conquered exam phobia. This was the first time he had aced an exam.

The next day, when the exam results were announced, Aru was the only one to get 50 out of 50. Mrs Pinto handed him a chocolate.

"Keep up the good work. I'm proud of you," she wrote on his sheet.

"Thank you, Kiko," Aru said later at home. "I couldn't have done it without your encouragement."

"You did it through magic," Kiko replied.

Aru stared at him, puzzled.

"There is a special magic in all of us. It's the magic of self-confidence," Kiko smiled. "You just made use of that magic."

2 DIY craft using paper plates

... And other common stationery

Flower basket

Materials needed

- 1 paper plate
- Coloured craft paper (blue, white, dark green, yellow and light green)
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue
- Black marker (optional)

Method

1) Fold the paper plate in half and cut out the centre, leaving a thick border to create the basket handle.
2) Cut out flower shapes from blue and white craft paper. Cut small yellow circles or fringed circles for the flower centres.
3) Cut several leaf shapes from green and light green craft paper.
4) Glue the flowers and leaves along the bottom of the paper plate to make them look like a bouquet in a basket.
5) Add the yellow flower centres.
6) Decorate the handle by sticking small paper flowers or star-shaped cut-outs along the arch.
7) Let the glue dry before displaying your colourful flower basket.

Animal faces

Materials needed

- Paper plates
- Yellow and orange paint
- Black craft paper
- Googly eyes
- Black marker
- Paintbrush
- Scissors
- Glue

Method

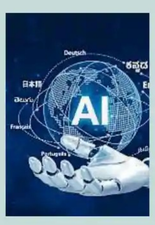
1) Paint the paper plates in bright colours, such as yellow for a leopard or orange for a tiger. Let them dry completely.
2) Cut out ears, noses and other facial features from black craft paper.
3) Glue the ears to the back of the plate and stick the nose in the centre.
4) Add googly eyes above the nose.
5) Use a black marker to draw the mouth and whiskers.
6) Paint or draw stripes for the tiger and spots for the leopard.
7) Allow everything to dry before displaying your adorable animal faces.

LET'S DEBATE!

Want to take part in the upcoming *Open Sesame* debate? Share your thoughts in a crisp 200-word essay on the topic 'Should schools make climate action projects compulsory?' Mail your works to *opensesame@deccanherald.co.in*. Entries close on July 9. Open to children below 16 years. Don't forget to mention your name, age, school, and city. And send us a recent photograph.

LETTER WRITING

Write an open letter to AI



If you could have a conversation with artificial intelligence, what would you like to know about it, and what would you tell it about yourself? Write an open letter and share it with us. You stand a chance of being featured in an upcoming edition. Mail your work to *opensesame@deccanherald.co.in*. Open to children below 16 years. Don't forget to mention your name, age, and city. And send us a recent photograph. Entries close on July 16.

Word of the Week
Yearn
(verb)
— To have a strong desire or longing for something.
Usages:
— Many people yearn for peace and happiness.
— Vishnu yearned to be home after a long journey.

If everyday objects could speak...

Open Sesame readers get into an imaginary conversation with a pillow, clock, and sharpener

Peace within

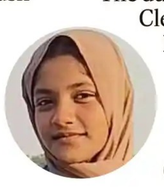
Live a life with no one,
But with something that doesn't judge you,
Like the pillow you weep on,
Which just advises you
When people push you away,
Ignoring you along the way.
Just like the nature you see,
Which tells stories of greatness.

The waterfall you've seen
That screams with you without hate,
And as helpful as a tree,
Live a life filled with freedom.
Being alone isn't a curse,
When we have a feeling of bliss
And hope in which you immerse,
Just to receive a blessing.
Objects may not talk,
But at least they won't mock.

JANAVI JAYAPRAKASH, 15
Mangaluru, Karnataka

Talking treasures

If everyday objects could talk...
My clock would say, "Wake up and shine!
Start your morning fresh; it's a wonderful time."
My toothbrush would say, "Brush your teeth with care;
A bright smile is always nice to wear."
My books would say, "Open us and read;
Knowledge and wisdom are guaranteed."



My school bag would say, "Pack me neatly and right;
Being organised makes your future bright."
My shoes would say, "Let's run and play,
And stay active every day."
The dustbin would say, "Use me;
Cleanliness is the key."
My classroom would welcome,
"Come in and learn;
With every lesson, new knowledge you'll earn."

FARIHA KHAJI, 13
Gadag, Karnataka

Desk diaries

If everyday objects could talk,
What would they have to say?
Against the misuse of their intended purpose?
If the sharpener on my desk could speak, would it clamour,
for it had been separated — razor and body?
Would I listen to its plea?
If the weapons under the davenports of teenagers could speak against their suffocation, would they?
For they breathe only before they draw innocent blood from the hands that hold them.
The maillots that cover our bodies, day and night, would plead for a break;
for a cleaning, for they have borne too much of our Napoleon complex.
Would the items of our hobbies speak about their shunning
for the sake of our prospects?
Would they question our pre-eminence without realising
the chains that tie our hands?

ADITI PRAVEEN, 15
Bengaluru, Karnataka

ART CORNER

Love painting?

Want to showcase your flair for colours? Send your paintings on the theme 'The future classroom in 2050' to *Open Sesame* and stand a chance to get featured in an upcoming edition. Mail photographs of your work to *opensesame@deccanherald.co.in*. Open to children below 16 years. Don't forget to mention your name, age, and city. And send us a recent photograph of yourself. Entries close on July 2.

This Week:

Heroic Helen

Open Sesame Quiz

Take the fun Open Sesame quiz, and stand a chance to win gift vouchers worth Rs 500. Open to children below 16 years.

Q1 Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880. Seven years later, on a date that she would call her "soul's birthday", who entered Helen's life, and went on to transform it?

Q2 In 1886, which inventor, scientist and engineer, working with hearing-impaired children, advised Helen Keller's parents to seek help for their daughter from the Perkins Institute for the Blind?

Q3 Writing about a contemporary, Helen Keller said that the "Voice of India" could not "escape the fate of all messiahs of humanity". Whose end did she thus predict?

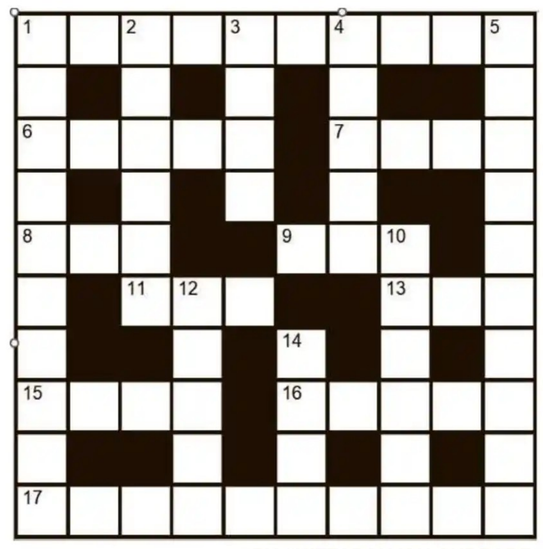
Scan the QR code
Or visit bit.ly/DHopensesame to participate in the quiz.

Q4 **Rhyme Time:** Two clues to which the answers rhyme with each other.
Clue A: Helen Keller's 1910 poetic reflection: 'The Song of the Stone ---'.
Clue B: Of more than average height.

Q5 **Clue Cluster:** Which author, much older than Helen Keller, treated her as an intellectual equal?
Use these clues.
a) Clemens
b) Sawyer
c) Mississippi
d) Finn

WINNER'S NAMES: Vaishnavi J Rao (16), Bengaluru; Charitrya Ganesh (14), Shiralakoppa; Dayana K (14), Karwar.
ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUIZ: A1) 50 th /Golden Jubilee, A2) Maharaj, A3) Queen Victoria, A4) Site/Bite, A5) 'Slumdog Millionaire'.

CROSSWORD



BY CHITTARANJAN ANDRADE

Across
1 Batman's name (5,5)
6 Comes close to (5)
7 Perform again (4)
8 Unhappy (3)
9 Possesses (3)
11 An anthropoid (3)
13 Meat preparation (3)
15 Sicilian volcano (4)
16 Abdominal cramps (5)
17 Peter Pan fairy (6,4)

Down
1 Exile (10)
2 African country (6)
3 Comfort (4)
4 Large artery (5)
5 Inexpensive (10)
10 Put aside (6)
12 Mischievous joke (5)
14 Mark left by wound (4)

ANSWERS
Across: 1 Bruce Wayne, 6 Nears, 7 Redo, 8 Sad, 9 Has, 11 Ape, 13 Ham, 15 Etna, 16 Colic, 17 Tinker Bell.
Down: 1 Banishment, 2 Uganda, 3 Ease, 4 Aorta, 5 Economical, 10 Shelve, 12 Prank, 14 Scar.

Terrestrial ecologist and certified diver, Seshadri K S, charts the stunning and fragile beauty of the underwater world and explains why saving our oceans lies in letting them heal on their own

An ecologist's notes on deep-sea diving

The boat was rocking gently, and the sun was well over the horizon. The air felt crisp and fresh. We sat on the deck, sipping kopi tubruk, an Indonesian-style unfiltered coffee. Bartholomeus, whom we called 'Muse', was our tour facilitator. Suddenly, he screamed, "Manta!" A couple of us slipped on our masks and jumped off the boat. In the group of seven, I was the only one who did not know how to swim. I put on a life jacket and jumped into the ocean. A large manta ray swam past, and we only got a fleeting glimpse. The current was strong, and before we knew it, we were being pushed away from the boat. The ill-fitting life jacket was making it impossible for me to stay afloat, let alone swim back to the boat. Muse threw a buoy ring over me and dragged me back to safety.

We were at a dive site aptly called 'Manta Point' in the waters of the Komodo National Park, in the Indonesian archipelago. The region is a global hotspot for the reef manta ray (*Mobula alfredi*). These giant fish, measuring up to 11 feet across, are found throughout the warm coastal waters of the Indo-Pacific. Unlike stingrays, they lack a venomous barb and filter-feed on tiny plankton. Sadly, their numbers are dwindling globally and they are classified as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. They are targeted for their gill plate, used in traditional medicine. Some get entangled in discarded fishing nets.

I was snorkelling for the first time and was gripped with fear. Once in the water, I realised that the mask was useless for me. Without spectacles, I'd be as blind as a bat, and the dive shop did not have masks that matched my eye power. So, while everyone else recounted spotting a variety of fish and other marine life, I could only report seeing varying shades of blue. I also had bruises from scraping against corals that I had floated past. My sighting of the manta, given the current and the panic, is a distant dark blur.

The oceans around Komodo are part of the Coral Triangle, the global centre of marine biodiversity, measuring about 6 million square kilometres. They are home to nearly 76% of the world's reef-building coral species and more than 3,000 species of fish. A decade ago, the gross domestic product of this marine ecosystem was pegged at a whopping USD 1.2 trillion per year.

On a typical snorkelling swim, one would float over a vibrant assemblage of staghorn and brain corals, bustling with colourful damselfish, anemone-dwelling clownfish, and schools of fusiliers

Underwater in Southeast Asia

As a terrestrial ecologist, I had been comfortable on terra firma. My fascination and knowledge of the marine world largely came from watching the 'Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau' broadcast on *Doordarshan* in the 1990s. I purchased a pair of prescription swimming goggles and learned to tread water in our university pool. Accompanied by my wife, Vidisha, who is also an ecologist, we spent several days snorkelling across parts of Southeast Asia. Although I could see well with my prescription mask, it kept leaking water and eventually fogged up. Finally, I decided to shave off my mustache and beard, something I had never done. It fixed the leak and fogging, alright, but I became the butt of all jokes in my friend's circle.

Having sacrificed my facial hair, I decided to try out a 'fun dive' with Vidisha. In a fun dive, the instructor would hold us and take us a few metres underwater. We were to do a total of three sessions, and the first one was for training. The instructor held us both, and we dived to a depth of about five metres. The feeling of being underwater was exhilarating. We saw a black-tipped reef shark swim away, and I recall seeing several kinds of fish in various colours and sizes across the reef. Subsequently, we went on another series of fun dives in the Coral Triangle in Semporna, Malaysian Borneo. For the first time, we encountered green turtles. They rested effortlessly on the reef and swam elegantly.

Certified divers

Last year, I decided to join Vidisha, who was working in the Andaman Islands, and we finally enrolled for our open water certification, a decade after I jumped blindly into the ocean. Open water certification is the first level of dive training. We began our first dive just off the jetty at Neil Island, in front of the dive shop. We floated up and down, trying to get our buoyancy right. I recall seeing a blue spotted ray on the sea floor. Near the reef, we could see corals, could hear parrotfish scraping off the algae, and clownfish hiding among the sea anemones. We came across several individuals of barrel sponges. These are among the largest invertebrate organisms in the ocean. The one we saw was easily about 4 ft wide in diameter. They feed by filtering microorganisms in the water, which is a sign that the reef is healthy.

In search of dugong

The next morning, we headed to a site called 'Aquarium'. We were told to keep an eye out for the dugong, a marine mammal that feeds on seagrass. The dugong (*Dugong dugon*), commonly known as the 'sea cow', is a large marine mammal that grows up to 10 feet long and can weigh nearly 400 kilograms. It is a herbivore and can be found singly or in pairs in the shallow coastal seagrass beds. Dugongs graze on the seagrass and rotate the sediment, encouraging the growth of high-nitrogen seagrass species. They are currently listed as 'vulnerable' globally, but in India, they are 'critically endangered'. Only a few fragmented populations survive in the Gulf of Mannar, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Gulf of Kutch. They are threatened by coastal development, gillnet entanglement, and the degradation of their feeding grounds.

Vidisha and I swam behind our instructor and passed over a large seagrass meadow. The large herbivores leave behind trails of the plants they have eaten. They likely graze in patches over a larger area. We encountered several feeding trails and even the poop of a dugong. Dugongs feed by using their muscular upper lips to pull out the seagrass plants. Thus, leaving behind a distinct trail where the plants have been removed amidst a meadow of green. These meandering paths on the sandy floor are distinctive, like a swath of carpet cleaned by a vacuum cleaner. Finding these fresh paths, alongside their fibrous, cylindrical fecal pellets resting on the seabed, is how marine researchers determine an active feeding ground even when the animals themselves remain hidden.

We couldn't find any signs of dugongs for the next half hour, and eventually surfaced. On the boat, we heard from the other group that they had seen a dugong for real, while we had to be content with seeing its poop.

Back in Bengaluru, we sat with our colleague Bharat Ahuja, a marine biologist at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, to identify the fish we had spotted. We were complaining about how it kept raining in the Andamans. Bharat pointed out that monsoon winds that affect terrestrial life so profoundly affect the ocean, too. "Monsoon winds lower sea temperatures and allow coral reefs to recover from harsh summers," he explained. Yet, studying these intricate connections is a major bottleneck in research. "Marine field work is tremendously expensive and heavily underfunded in our country," lamented Bharat. He was among the few who has conducted field research in protected areas in the Andaman Sea.

From top: Clown fish are found across the oceans in South East Asia; Seshadri spotted feather stars in Dickson's pinnacle, a dive site off Havelock island; Gorgonians are a diverse group of soft corals. They are threatened by climate change and from harvest for trade; Tabular corals can be restored by transplanting and affixing them elsewhere. PICS: CHAITANYA ARJUNWADKAR

We returned to the Andamans earlier this year to get our advanced dive certification, as it would allow us to go 30 m deep. As part of the training, we would dive at night, and near a shipwreck. We would also be diving at almost the maximum depth allowed. On the night dive, we encountered several kinds of fish, including a pufferfish, asleep in a barrel sponge we had seen during the day. We could also notice flecks of bioluminescent plankton in the pitch darkness.

Beneath the surface

Being underwater is meditative. You are forced to focus on your breathing, and your worries seem distant. However, for our oceans, the threat is immediate. Despite being the largest ecosystem on the planet, oceans continue to be understudied. "Convincing funders that long-term ecological work is powerful and essential, often over decadal time scales, is the hardest part," said Rohan Arthur, a scientist at the Nature Conservation Foundation. "Funders get bored with supporting projects over long periods, and most of the long-term work I have done is despite, and not because of the funding I've received," he emphasised.

Projects such as the Great Nicobar Project are portrayed as an essential step of progress despite the assured destruction of fragile ecosystems on the Great Nicobar. The idea of building a mega transshipment port, resorts, and an armed forces base by clearing primary rainforests, relocating coral reefs, and disrupting nesting beaches of the world's largest turtles has obviously been met with resistance.

As with terrestrial ecosystems, restoration is a catch-all phrase and a way to greenwash the damage caused. "There is limited evidence that the restoration of seagrass or corals is effective at scale. Examples where restoration has led to recovery and formation of a self-sustaining, fully functional reef globally are virtually none," explains Rohan, who has mentored several generations of marine biologists in India, working out of both the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands. "The Mars reef restoration programme in Indonesia, supported by the bottomless funding of the Mars chocolate company, is one famous example. They have spent nearly USD 1 million per hectare per year recovering some four hectares of reef that was destroyed by blast fishing. The reliance on 15 divers to clean, retransplant, and monitor the reef on a regular basis makes it akin to gardening," he elaborates.

Even if restoration efforts were to work, the corals are increasingly being bleached by rising temperatures. "Climate change research on ocean ecosystems is uneven across the topics. There is accumulating evidence on the synergistic impacts of temperature and pH on marine organisms," laments Amit Kumar, an associate professor at Sathyabama University, Chennai. Added to these larger challenges, our oceans now have several expanding garbage patches, including one in the Indian Ocean. The floating pile of garbage leaches chemicals and microplastics into the oceans, apart from killing animals that accidentally consume them. "We found microplastics in sharks and commercial fish such as anchovies. They are found even in the muscle tissue and reproductive organs, apart from their gut. All this will certainly have cascading consequences on the ecosystem," cautions Garima Bora, a researcher with Dakshin Foundation, Bengaluru.

Ecological security

The Great Nicobar Project proposes to mitigate its impact by transplanting the coral reefs at the site of the upcoming port to a new site, an effort Rohan labels as downright cynical. "No responsible scientist who has worked on coral relocation would sign off on a project of this nature with their hand on their heart," he notes. "Most ecosystems have the resilience to recover on their own when the underlying stressors are removed, and I am a strong advocate for focusing our efforts on correctly identifying and addressing these underlying stressors, in what is called passive restoration," explained Rohan.

Coral reefs are critical nurseries for marine life, and ultimately, the economic resilience of local fisheries relies entirely on their structural health being intact. Already, the deep-water fisheries have resorted to scraping the bottom using trawl nets, destroying sea floor habitat, and increasingly capturing more waste than high-value catch. Replacing complex reef systems with a transshipment port inflicts more damage than just erasing biodiversity. It would permanently displace the indigenous, small-scale fishing communities who have lived on the Great Nicobar. Books such as 'The Great Nicobar Betrayal' by the renowned writer Pankaj Sekhsaria serve as crucial documented evidence of potential damage to the fragile ecosystem.

We do not know yet if the project will be executed. If it does, Rohan argues that our collective duty must shift to history. "We must document the destruction of the ecosystem as transparently as possible and let the future be the judge of the choices we have made as a society to prioritise a certain narrow vision of economic growth over ecological integrity and indigenous rights."

As we swam to the precipice of Dickson's pinnacle and peered into the depths of the deep blue ocean, the cautionary words of the renowned marine biologist and oceanographer, Sylvia Earle, reminded us of human folly. "Far and away, the greatest threat to the ocean, and thus to ourselves, is ignorance."

With all the overwhelming evidence showing that our existence depends on the oceans and how our actions impact them, we no longer have the luxury of that excuse.

Seshadri K S is an ecologist and faculty member at ATREE, Bengaluru.

Chaitanya Arjunwadkar from Dakshin Foundation uses a quadrat (square plastic frame) to measure dead and live corals in the Andamans. PIC: NANDITA GATTANI

Like this story? Email: dhonsat @deccanherald.co.in

MUSICANA

Morsing and the art of sollus

Bhagyalakshmi Krishna tells N Krishnamurthy about her journey of becoming the leading female morsing player in Karnatik music

Bhagyalakshmi Krishna's foray into the world of the morsing happened by accident. More than 40 years ago, kanjira artiste H P Ramachar was putting together an all-women ensemble and needed a morsing player. He turned to morsing artiste L Bhimachar and asked, 'Why not teach your daughter the morsing?' Bhagyalakshmi was only 10 years old at the time. Still, in under three months, she had learnt enough to perform with the ensemble. She fell in love with the instrument's distinctive twang, and there was no looking back.

While many women play the morsing in folk music traditions, Bhagyalakshmi is perhaps the only woman performing at the top professional level in Karnatik music. The 51-year-old is an A-Top grade artiste with All India Radio.

Today, she owns a collection of more than 500 morsings in different scales. "The most precious ones are those given to me by my father," she says. Measuring 12 cm in length and 6 cm in width, the morsing is so tiny that it is almost invisible to the audience, clutched between the player's hands on stage. Shaped like a horseshoe, it consists of two parts: a metal tongue, fixed at one end and flexible at the other, and a bent section called the trigger. The performer places the morsing against the teeth and recites sollus (rhythmic syllables) while simultaneously plucking the trigger. Sollus are the spoken equivalent of percussion strokes, and "mastering the sollus is critical," she says.

Her father and first guru instilled in her a strong sense of rhythm and melody. And from her mentors, Sukanya Ramgopal and H S Sudhindra, she learnt the importance of timing. "The morsing should enhance the concert, not disturb its flow," she explains.

Morsing is similar to the Jew's harp.

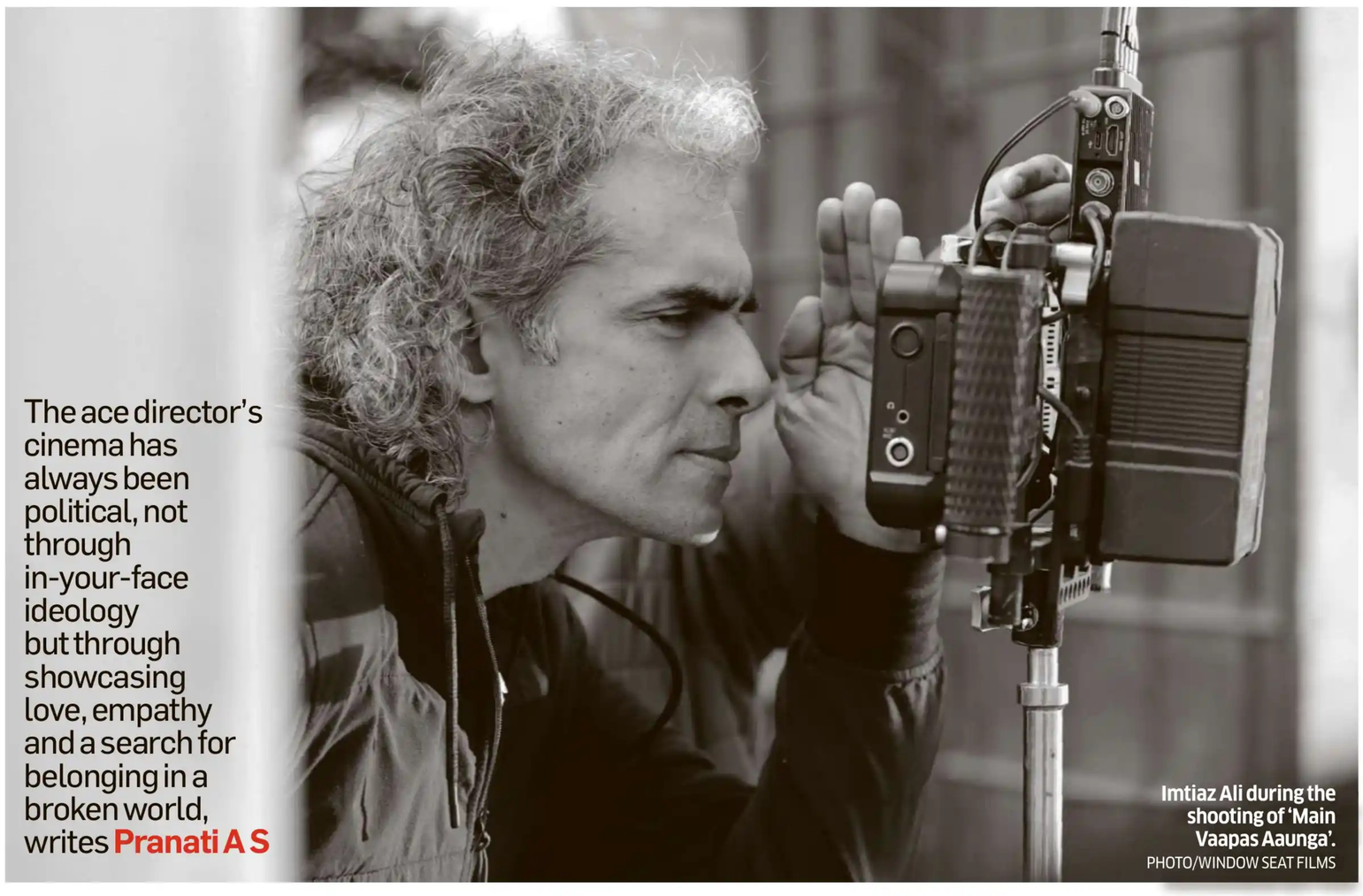
Bhagyalakshmi initially performed as part of ensembles. At 20, she presented a lecture-demonstration at the Music Academy in Chennai. "After seeing me accompany M Balamuralikrishna on tours, the Academy invited me to perform at its annual December Music Season in 2007. It was a major milestone in my career," she recalls. She has played there every year since, winning the 'Best Senior Upapakkavadyam Artiste' award in 2017 and 2019. Upapakkavadyam refers to a secondary accompanying instrument.

She counts her performance at the International Jew's Harp Festival in Amsterdam in 2006 as her most memorable concert. "I saw so many women from around the world playing the Jew's harp (similar to the morsing)," she says. She would like to see more women in Karnatik music take up the morsing.

Meanwhile, she is glad that her family's musical legacy has entered its third generation. Her 23-year-old son, Likhith, is a B-High grade morsing artiste with All India Radio.

(The author is the founder of a tech company and writes about music and everyday life.)

Bhagyalakshmi Krishna started learning morsing at the age of 10.



The ace director's cinema has always been political, not through in-your-face ideology but through showcasing love, empathy and a search for belonging in a broken world, writes **Pranati A S**

Imtiaz Ali during the shooting of 'Main Vaapas Aaunga'. PHOTO/WINDOW SEAT FILMS

Why LOVE is Imtiaz Ali's POLITICS

Every time Imtiaz Ali is posed with questions about the politics in his films — especially after his 2024 biographical drama 'Amar Singh Chamkila' and now the Partition drama 'Main Vaapas Aaunga' — he has always maintained that his films are rooted in human emotion rather than driven by any political agenda. Yet his films arrive at political conclusions. This is not because they are about ideologies, but because they are about love. And love in his films is not necessarily about romantic connections — though it is that too — but also about ethical positions. His films show that understanding another person's pain is itself a political act. And where does that empathy come from? From love.

Diljit Dosanjh's Nirvair in 'Main Vaapas Aaunga' — after learning about his grandfather's yearning for the love of his life, whom he left behind during Partition — tells his girlfriend Kaveri, 'Ye pyaar milta nahi hai. Ye hamare andar hai.' (This love is not what you get; it is inside us). Imtiaz reflects this philosophy in his cinema. Through his protagonists, he tells us love is more important than anything — whether it is about romantic connection, self-love or love for one's calling.

Home and love become interchangeable ideas in his films. Belonging, one of the most recurring themes in Imtiaz's cinema, is inseparable from love. For him, love is belonging, a place where one can exist without the burden of judgement, loneliness, fear, or performance. Class, profession and social expectations are obstacles his protagonists overcome. One of Imtiaz's strongest commentaries across his films is his critique of corporate culture, the grind of capitalism and a life of monotony that keeps people away from human connection.

'Love Aaj Kal' (2009) and 'Tamasha' push conversations towards valuing deep connections and refusing to suffocate one's childhood passion, urging us to never kill the child within simply to conform to social and familial expectations. Ved in 'Tamasha' leaves behind his corporate job to pursue storytelling as his true calling. Aditya in 'Jab We Met' learns to love himself and forges a strong connection with Geet. In 'Love Aaj Kal' (2009), Jai leaves his Golden Gate dream job to return to Meera, while Veer Singh and Harleen confront class differences and social hierarchy, and Nirvair ('Main Vaapas Aaunga') leaves his corporate rut behind to find his way back home. In 'Highway', Veera finds a sense of freedom and belonging not within the comforts of her privileged life but on the road, far away from the structures that sought to define her.

Even in 'Rockstar', which is often read as a story about pain and heartbreak as the secret to becoming a legendary artiste, Imtiaz finally suggests that artistic greatness is hollow without love. The heartbreak Jordan seeks turns him into a soulful musician and later into an angry and world-famous rock icon, but the restlessness and helplessness that come from the heartbreak consume him completely. The last seven minutes that show glimpses of Jordan's life leave you with one overwhelming thought: if only he had found love and been allowed to keep it. Nobody should have to live with a void where love once was. Jordan's *maidaan* belongs here among us, not in some faraway land.

Imtiaz is widely celebrated for revolutionising Bollywood through his philosophical explorations of love, loss, longing, self-discovery and personal freedom. With 'Amar Singh Chamkila' and 'Main Vaapas Aaunga', however, Imtiaz has stepped into what feels like the second phase of his cinematic life, where he appears to be responding more directly to the politics around us. This time, he uses love as a symbol of revolution. The politics remain the same, only louder.

In 'Amar Singh Chamkila', set in the 1980s, Imtiaz uses the story of a man who tried to remain true to himself, to examine artistic expression caught between cancel culture, moral policing, public judgement and state censorship: forces that continue to shape the present.

Irshad Kamil's mystic Sufi poetry in 'Bol Mohobbat' ('Amar Singh Chamkila') — which seeks liberation through love — takes the form of an anthem of spiritual and artistic revolution. The song resonates with Jordan's inner battles, Veera's awakening, Harry's loneliness (in 'Jab Harry Met Sejal') and Ved's alienation. The situations are different, but the yearning remains the same.

Even when faced with global conflict and devastation, Imtiaz continues to imagine love as an antidote to hatred. In the final credit song, 'Kya Kamaal Hai' in 'Main Vaapas Aaunga', Diljit sings a song about a world that is filled with love, hope and peace, even as visuals of bombings, refugees, migrants and children affected by war and devastation unfold on screen. While the director acknowledges the atrocities, he dreams of a world without hate.

Imtiaz's films repeatedly take the side of the vulnerable, the yearning, the displaced, the dreamer, the migrant — the human being. For Imtiaz Ali, human emotion is the political agenda.

Watch this space for an exclusive interview with **Imtiaz Ali** next week.

FEEDBACK
Send your ideas and comments to dhonsat @deccanherald.co.in

MOVIE REVIEWS

Even Superman can't save this script

TAHER AHMED

Milly Alcock as Supergirl.

★★☆☆☆

Supergirl

English (Theatres)

Director: Craig Gillespie

Cast: Milly Alcock, Matthias Schoenaerts, Eve Ridley David Krumholtz, Emily Beecham

Superman's greatest weakness has always been Kryptonite. Supergirl discovers a far more potent one: the script. For a hero capable of surviving exploding planets and impossible odds, it's ironic that her biggest enemy is a story that drains every ounce of depth, originality and emotion. Superman's "S" has always stood for hope. Here, it stands for spectacularly forgettable.

One wishes for a good film hiding beneath the cape, but the cape is barely worn in the movie, and when it is finally worn, it seems worn out.

Milly Alcock stars as Kara Zor-El, a realist when compared to her cousin Superman, who is currently bent on drowning herself in intergalactic pub runs in the garb of celebrating her birthday. During one such session, she comes across Ruthye Marye Knoll (Eve Ridley), a young girl out to avenge her murdered family.

Here begins the unlikely sisterhood, which Supergirl is not elated about, until her dog Krypto is shot and poisoned by Krem of the Yellow Hills (Matthias Schoenaerts), the same man who orphaned Ruthye.

With time running out, the duo embarks on a journey to save Krypto and maybe get revenge, all while saving young girls captured as sex slaves and taking on a bunch of bad guys.

The problem lies in the fact that there is no storytelling, no depth to the characters, and things seem borrowed. Even the visuals are run-of-the-mill, something you are accustomed to.

Jason Momoa's Lobo injects some much-needed energy into the proceedings, but one entertaining character isn't enough to resuscitate a film that's running on autopilot.

By the time the credits roll, Supergirl hasn't crashed and burned. That would've at least been memorable. Instead, it commits the greater cinematic crime of simply being spectacularly forgettable.

Nostalgia and B'luru gangsters

PRANATI A S

Ashish Vidyarthi

★★★☆☆

Balaramana Dinagalu

Kannada (Theatres)

Director: K M Chaitanya

Cast: Vinod Prabhakar, Ashish Vidyarthi, Atul Kulkarni, Ramesh Indira

'Balaramana Dinagalu' opens with weapons smuggled into the jail, hidden inside masala doses. For those familiar with Bengaluru's underworld, it is clear this is not a completely fictional film, adding an extra layer of intrigue to what follows.

Directed by K M Chaitanya, 'Balaramana Dinagalu' feels like a sequel to 'Aa Dinagalu'. The film traces the rise of rowdy-sheeter Balarama, the character who also appears in 'Aa Dinagalu'. Chaitanya doesn't take long to establish how a village boy ended up in Jayaram's (read Jayaraj) den. He cuts to the chase with a compelling chase sequence that captures the gullies where crime operated in the '80s. The sequence is captured brilliantly by cinematographer H C Venu and by art director Vishwas Kashyap's nuanced depiction of the area.

Balarama is portrayed as a Godfather-like figure, a benefactor to the poor and powerless. This influence stems from Jayaram himself, whose larger-than-life public image shapes the character's on-screen presence. Even so, the film does not extend sympathy to the characters, refusing to romanticise gangsters despite their charisma. Like most gangster dramas, the film pits the 'good bad' against the 'bad bad', but never loses sight of the violence and moral compromises that define both worlds.

Vinod Prabhakar delivers a captivating performance, but in scenes with Ashish Vidyarthi (Jayaram) and Atul Kulkarni (Shashidhar), his limitations become apparent. Their commanding screen presence and layered performances overshadow him.

The film's grainy texture and colour palette give it a retro, nostalgic feel. 'Balaramana Dinagalu' also reminds us of the stories of old Bengaluru we grew up curious about.

The film's background score carries a distinct rock sensibility, reflecting the prominence of rock music in Bengaluru during the '80s and early '90s.

The film is an engrossing reconstruction of a city and a time that continues to shape its popular imagination.

Good plot, poor execution

JAGADISH ANGADI

The film's lead cast.

★★☆☆☆

Moda Kavida Vaatavarana

Kannada (Theatres)

Director: Simple Suni

Cast: Sheelam M Swamy, Saathvika, Moksha Kushal, Rishi, Rekha Prasad

'Moda Kavida Vaatavarana' explores the complexities of human emotion layered with psychological undertones. The film follows two couples trapped in emotional turmoil as they struggle to navigate their relationships.

Set against the picturesque backdrop of Kodagu, the film opens with Cherish (Sheelam) and Saathvika (Saathvika) arriving at a resort. There, they cross paths with Souparnika (Moksha) and Dhananjaya (Dhananjaya).

The narrative takes a turn when a series of unsettling incidents begins to disrupt Souparnika's stay. As the mystery deepens, it is soon revealed that her troubled past is at the heart of the chaos. Determined to uncover the truth, Cherish steps in to help her. The rest of the story unravels the ultimate fate of all four characters.

The leisurely pace of the first half heavily tests the audience's patience. The post-interval scenes offer a few engaging moments, keeping viewers hooked until the climax. The background score and music complement the narrative, while the cinematography beautifully captures the scenic charm of Kodagu. The lead actors deliver satisfactory performances.

However, director Suni attempts to blend romance with psychological drama but fails due to poor execution. He gets caught between a love story and a psychological mystery. The non-linear narrative doesn't sit well.

'Moda Kavida...' offers a superficial understanding of Cluster Personality Disorder. Souparnika's character never truly exhibits the behavioural traits expected of someone dealing with the condition. To make matters worse, some scenes and dialogues intended for "comic relief" are in poor taste. Ultimately, a deeper exploration of the disorder, and a tighter screenplay could have elevated this into a truly compelling experience.

Years after its release, Rachita Gorowala explores if the Oscar-nominated movie has aged well (or not)

'Lagaan': 25 years later

I remember standing at the ticket counter of Bhopal Talkies, a single-screen theatre, on a hot sunny day, for a 3 pm show. The news was all over. 'Lagaan' was already a sensation. All the theatres and the two new multiplexes in Bhopal were full. We somehow managed balcony seats and popcorn in plastic packets. The theatre soon went dark.

Then came the opening: a sophisticated saxophone background score, gleaming shots of royal memorabilia, the anticipation of Aamir, and Bachchan's stunning voice. And it began. Maai looks at the sky. The first shot, apparently also the first shot shot. Something landed right there. A moment that revealed itself with so much truth, I knew I liked the film already.

'Lagaan' offered a novelty that, as an audience, I hadn't felt in movies, and very rarely have after. We witnessed a world made of dry earth, fragrant, deeply textural, hyperlocal in the way it looked and sounded, unforgiving and harsh. Bit by bit, the distance between the screen and the audience dissolved. The theatre turned into an arena, charged with cheers and tears and slogans of "Ae bhaiya, chhoote lagan!" and "Come on, Kachra!". United, we cheered for Bhuvan's eleven. All of 14, back in 2001, I surrendered to one of the most remarkable collective experiences of my life.

Twenty-five years later, I revisited it searching for the same feeling.

This time, Bhuvan felt less a character than an ideal. Of the earth, the karta dharta (sole doer), the bringer of peace, the man who takes upon himself the burden of imagining a better future and lifting the weight of threefold lagaan. Faced with a village conditioned by oppression and scarcity, he absorbs everyone's anger and resentment without ever being fundamentally altered by it.

The film cannot allow him contradiction because he functions as a moral container into which everyone else's complexity is put in. This irked me.

An opportunity to explore moral ambiguity is resolved too quickly. Bhuvan smooths it over in an almost street theatre-like fashion, or a motivational song written by the brilliant Javed Akhtar and the divine renditions of A R Rahman. Bhuvan's leaps of faith are often rewarded through the feminine. Elizabeth's undying support could barely exist outside the realm of hero worship, while Gauri was his Parvati, Radha and Rukmini. Maai, in reminding Bhuvan that his father was like him too, reinforced dharma. All the women had one job: to make him feel like an ideal man.

Despite the little room they get within the bounds of stereotyping, Goli, Bhoora, Arjan, Ismail and Vedji leave an impression. Whenever a window opens, they seize it completely. Their rootedness comes not from the writing but from the actors themselves. You can feel years of theatre in their bodies.

But Kachra. Oh, why, I thought at first. But then I thought: 'Lagaan', being a popcorn masala piece, uses alternative history as a device to evoke the cruelty of the Raj and eventually subverts empathy to deepen nationalism. In that subversion, what are class and caste? Collateral.

The appropriation of Kachra still doesn't feel right. His suffering, his disability and his caste are gathered into the emotional project of inclusion, but that inclusion ultimately serves the larger triumph. Is Kachra embraced for who he is, or for what he enables?

Lakha, in a beautiful way, wiggles his way into the future. He explores some depth of desire as a response to class oppression. He seemed most relatable, and his transformation is remarkable.

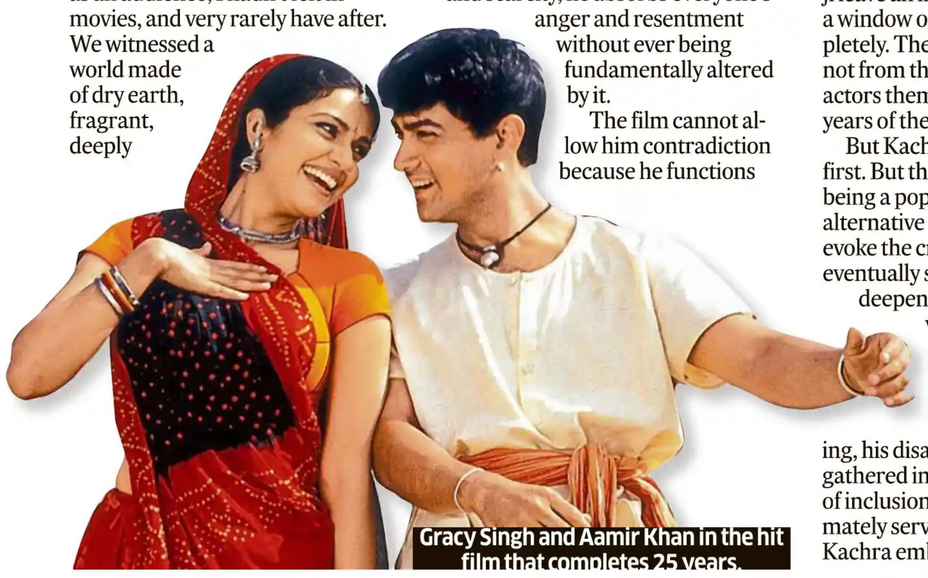
Among all the discourse around 'Lagaan', the making of the film shown beautifully in the documentary 'Chale Chalo' is the most fascinating. It is filled with human moments where everyone, especially director Ashutosh Gowarikar, is put under the microscope time and again. His constant back and forth with the producers over budgets for a film that was anything but a template is inspiring. It is a stunning display of grit, teamwork, discipline and faith.

It is A R Rahman's music that does it entirely. In a recent interview celebrating twenty-five years of the film, Rahman said two things that stayed with me. One, that while building a song, repetition of a rhythm bores him and sends him in myriad, unknown directions, giving the song a certain novelty. The second, he spoke of a candle that he lights while waiting for a tune to come to him. A divine intervention indeed.

Perhaps that is why the music continues to surprise me even when the screenplay no longer does.

There is little disagreement that 'Lagaan' is among the defining works of Indian popular cinema. My interest here is not in contesting its craft, but in understanding the emotional architecture that made it so enduring and what it asks us to overlook in return.

(The author is a filmmaker based in Bhopal and Mumbai)



Gracy Singh and Aamir Khan in the hit film that completes 25 years.

MASTER PICKS

Céline Sciamma

Portrait of a Lady on Fire (2019)
Set on an isolated island in the 18th century, a female painter paints a wedding portrait of a young woman. They fall in love with each other, leading to a passionate and romantic affair.
Mubi

Water Lilies (2007)
The coming-of-age drama explores the sexual awakenings, unrequited infatuations, and emotional confusion of three 15-year-old girls living in the suburbs of Paris.
Criterion Collection/ Amazon Prime Video

Petite Maman (2021)
In her mother's childhood home, an eight-year-old girl meets a way too familiar girl her own age and develops a strong bond with her in this fantasy drama.
Mubi

Tom Boy (2011)
The film follows the explorations of a gender non-conforming child, Lauree, who presents herself as a boy in her new neighbourhood.
Criterion Collection

Girlhood (2014)
The film follows a shy teenager trapped in her abusive home reinventing herself when she joins a fun and vibrant girl-gang — emphasising the free-spirited, joyful nature of female friendships.
Criterion Collection

Soli Merwan Cama (right), sports promoter and sponsor of the Juvenile Sprinters' Million, poses with the trophy with Bangalore Turf Club steward Manjunath Ramesh on Friday.

Iron Mirage for main event

BENGALURU SELECTIONS

P Prasanna Kumar-trained Iron Mirage, to be ridden by Akshay Kumar, is fancied to win the S M Cama Music and Production Pvt Ltd Juvenile Sprinters Million (Grade III), the feature event of the races on Saturday.

1. The Smart Chieftain Plate -- 1400M: Rampage 1, Ashwa New York 2, Bellucci 3.
2. The Poonawalla Stud Plate (Div II) -- 1200M: Bestidentification 1, Defence Counsel 2, La McQueen 3.
3. The Aastronomic Plate -- 2000M: Youremanorborne 1, Winfield 2, Magnus 3.
4. The Managing Committee Gold Cup -- 1600M: Promiseofthefuture 1, Superstar 2, Xanthe 3.
5. The S M Cama Music and Production Pvt Ltd Juvenile Sprinters ' Million (Grade III) -- 1200M: Iron Mirage 1, A Great Buzz 2, Burevestnik 3.
6. The Malakpet Plate -- 1300M: Shining Ways 1, Darrington 2, Lasya 3.
7. The Poonawalla Stud Plate (Div I) -- 1200M: Aquastic 1, Kabali 2, Densetsu 3.
Day's best: Youremanorborne. **Jackpot:** 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7. **Mini jackpot:** 4,5, 6 & 7. **I treble:** 2, 3 & 4. **II treble:** 5, 6 & 7.

IN BRIEF

Mayweather, Pacquiao bout postponed

▸ A highly anticipated rematch between boxing legends Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao has been postponed indefinitely, Pacquiao's camp in the Philippines said on Friday, reports AFP from Manila.

The news followed ESPN reporting that a planned Mayweather exhibition in Greece had been called off after an events company connected to the Pacquiao bout had sought an injunction.

State-ranking TT from Jul 1

▸ Dakshina Kannada District Table Tennis Association will conduct a State-ranking TT tournament from July 1-4 at the Mangalore Table Tennis Academy, reports DHNS.

The event will held for boys and girls (U-11, U-13, U-15, U-17 and U-19), men's and women's singles, and NMS categories. Late date for entries is June 28. For details, call Gowtham Shetty 98451 21498 or submit entries on karnatakatabletennis.in.

Mirabai to lead charge at CWG

NEW DELHI, PTI: Two-time Commonwealth Games champion and veteren Mirabai Chanu will once again spearhead India's weightlifting campaign at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games beginning on July 23.

India team: Women: Mirabai Chanu (48kg), Gyaneshwari Yadav (53kg), Bindyarani Devi (58kg), Harjinder Kaur (69kg), Sanjana (77kg), Martina Devi (+86kg).
Men: Rishikanta Singh (60kg), M Raja (65kg), Ajaya Babu (79kg), Dilabg Singh (94kg), Lovepreet Singh (+110kg).

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

Women's WC: Pakistan vs Netherlands **(3 pm)**, West Indies vs Ireland **(7 pm)**, England vs New Zealand **(11 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

3rd Test: England vs New Zealand **(day 3, 3:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

1st Test: West Indies vs Sri Lanka **(day 3, 7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

4-day Test: Sri Lanka A vs India A **(day 3, 10 am)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

Maharaja T20 Trophy: Shivamogga Yodhas vs Kalyani Bengaluru Blasters **(2:30 pm)**, Mysore Warriors vs Gulbarga Mystics **(7 pm)**. **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

MOTORSPORT

Formula 1: Austrian GP **(qualifying, 7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

CRICKET FIRST T20I

Ireland script a famous win

Immaculate hosts shock full-strength Indian team by 34 runs

BELFAST, PTI

After setting a target of 183, Ireland shone with the ball to post their maiden international win over India in Belfast on Friday. X

Immaculate Ireland bowlers gnawed on Indian batters' impatience on a rather pacy pitch with exemplary lengths, etching a historic 34-run victory in the first T20I match here on Friday.

It was Ireland's first-ever victory over reigning T20 world champions India in any format, and the hosts have now taken a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

Chasing 183 on a pitch that had enough assistance for quick bowlers was not improbable but needed a different, pragmatic approach after power play.

But none of them had the patience, as India ended up at 148 all out, despite Abhishek Sharma making a 20-ball 50.

Debutant pacer Jai Moondra (2/26) inflicted the first blow on his country of origin, eliciting an inside on to the stumps from Sanju Samson.

The Irish bowlers continued to pull the length back as Indians perished with alarming regularity.

Ishan Kishan went for a trademark hack to leg-side off Matt Hollard (3/28) and Lorcan Tucker completed a simple catch inside the circle.

Shreyas Iyer's first match as India's full-time T20 skipper ended horribly wrong, and his batting failure added to the gloominess.

Iyer attempted a flick off Hollard but could not impart force or distance to the pace-off delivery, getting caught in the deep by George Dockrell.

India scored 68 in the power play but had lost three wickets.

However, Abhishek played a gem, a 20-ball fifty, as wickets tumbled around him, and punished pacer Liam McCarthy for four boundaries in the third over as India breezed ahead.

But the left-hander found Ben Calitz with surgical precision through a pull off McCarthy, bringing a smile to Ireland players' faces.

Those smiles only widened once Tilak Varma and Shivam Dube went without making much of an impact.

The final nail was thudded on India's coffin when Arshdeep Singh fell to Matthew Humphreys, leaving the Irish camp in a joyous huddle.

No debut for Soorya

Earlier, Indian pacers stuck to hard lengths and preyed on the aggressive tendencies of Ireland batters, limiting them to 182 for nine.

The much-anticipated international debut for teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi did not happen, but the full house at Stormont ground had enough to cheer for as India, led by Harshit Rana (3/24) dominated from ball one.

Ireland skipper Tucker made a half-century (50, 36 balls) but it was largely a lone hand.

SCOREBOARD

IRELAND

Tector c Iyer b Harshit	17
Adair c Samson b Harshit	12
Tector c Samson b Arshdeep	0
Tucker c Tilak b Harshit	50
Calitz c Prasidh b Dube	15
Delany c Patel b Arshdeep	49
Dockrell c Arshdeep b Axar	19
McCarthy c Tilak b Axar	7
Humphreys (run out)	2
Moondra (not out)	2
Extras (LB-3, NB-1, W-5)	9
TOTAL (for 9 wkts, in 20 overs)	**182**

Fall of wickets: 1-20, 2-25, 3-30, 4-51, 5-115, 6-164, 7-178, 8-178, 9-182.
Bowling: Arshdeep 4-0-28-2, Harshit 4-0-24-3, Prasidh 4-0-57-0, Dube 3-0-18-1, Axar 4-0-33-2, Sundar 1-0-19-0.

INDIA

Abhishek c Calitz b McCarthy	50
Samson b Moondra	5
Kishan c Tucker b Hollard	1
Shreyas c Dockrell b Hollard	3
Tilak c Adair b Humphreys	19
Sundar c Calitz b Hollard	9
Dube c & b Moondra	25
Axar c Tector b Delany	15
Harshit c Calitz b Humphreys	8
Arshdeep c Tector b Humphreys	2
Prasidh (not out)	1
Extras (LB-3, NB-1, W-7)	11
TOTAL (all out, in 18.5 overs)	**148**

Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-45, 3-60, 4-80, 5-90, 6-100, 7-135, 8-137, 9-147. **Bowling:** Humphreys 3.5-0-38-3, Moondra 4-0-25-2, McCarthy 3-0-29-1, Hollard 4-0-28-3, Tector 3-0-22-0, Delany 1-0-3-1.

Result: Ireland won by 34 runs. **PoM:** Matthew Hollard. **2nd T20I:** June 28 in Belfast. **Series:** Ireland lead 2-match series 1-0

Jurel heaps more misery on Lanka A

GALLE, PTI

Dhruv Jurel

India A struck early twice after skipper Dhruv Jurel's unbeaten 141 propelled the visitors to a massive 452 for six declared in the first innings of their first unofficial Test here on Friday.

Anshul Kamboj (1/22) and Yash Thakur (1/20) claimed a wicket each to rock Sri Lanka A early, who reached 113 for two when the stumps were drawn. The hosts are trailing by another 339 runs in the first essay.

Kamboj provided the first breakthrough when he had Sri Lanka wicketkeeper-batter Niroshan Dickwella caught by Rasheed for 10, while Thakur cleaned up Pawantha Weerasinghe for 11 to keep India A on top.

But Nuwanidu Fernando showed some positive intent as he cracked seven boundaries to score 65 not out off 103 balls, while Ashen Bandara was accompanying him on 18 not out at the close of play.

With their team in a spot of bother at 38 for two, the two Sri Lankan batters joined forces to keep India waiting for further success while putting on runs comfortably. By stumps, Fernando and Bandara had put on an unbeaten 75 runs for the third wicket.

Jurel was the top scorer for India A, cracking 13 fours and a six to make 141 not out from 215 balls. The India A skipper's knock had a right blend of caution and aggression that drove his team to a position of command.

Brief scores: India A (O/n: 333/4): 452/6 decl in 111.4 overs (Sai Sudharsan 132, Aayush Pandey 25, Dhruv Jurel 141 n.o., Shaik Rahseed 63, Harsh Dubey 30; Chamika Gunasekara 3-84, Dilum Sudeera 2-143) vs Sri Lanka A: 113/2 in 31 overs (Nuwanidu Fernando 65 n.o.).

More than 100 women sign up for ICC's protection programme

LONDON, PTI: More than 100 women cricketers have signed up for the ICC Player Protection Programme to "silence trolls on social media platforms" in partnership with AI-powered moderator Freedom2hear, which has weeded out almost 60,000 "harmful pieces of content" during the ongoing T20 World Cup.

Over 50 new sign-ups were recorded at the start of the tournament here, the ICC said in a release.

"...while the service provides additional protection across official ICC social media accounts. Seven of the 12 teams competing at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 are protected, with umpires and broadcasters also registered," the statement read.

After the first week of the T20 World Cup, the tool reviewed nearly 250,000 comments and removed almost 60,000 harmful pieces of content. "More than 2,000 repeat offenders had temporary restrictions put on their interactions, and 370 users were blocked."

Karnataka girls sprint to gold

Krishik takes bronze in men's 110m hurdles but misses out on Asiad cut

ADITYA K HALDER
BHUBANESWAR, DHNS

Karnataka women's 4x100m relay team shake a leg after winning gold in Bhubaneswar. From left: Prakruthi Rao, Daneshwari T, V Sudheeksha and Unnathi Aiyappa.
DH PHOTO/ ADITYA K HALDER

Karnataka bagged their second gold medal at the National Inter-State Athletics Championships here as the state's 4x100m women's relay team dominated the final despite the absence of star runner Sneha S S on Friday.

The quartet of Unnathi Aiyappa, Prakruthi R Rao, Daneshwari T, V Sudheeksha clocked 44.75 seconds to not just finish ahead of the rest of the pack but also breached the Asian Games qualification mark of 45.24. Nandhini K-led Tamil Nadu finished second at 45.07 while Maharashtra, which included India's current fastest runner Harita Bhadra, took the bronze at 46.21.

"We never had a doubt on winning this race despite Sneha's absence," Unnathi, who ran the anchor leg, told *DH*. "Karnataka are always strong in sprint and since we all had a good season, we knew we will take this one."

State champion Prakruthi R Rao, who trains in Chennai, gave Karnataka a good start in the anchor leg while experienced runner Daneshwari T and Sudheeksha V ensured they handed the baton to Unnathi with a good lead. TN's Giridharini R pushed close to Unnathi but the in-form Karnataka runner was too far out of her reach.

"We had little time to do baton exchange practice before the race as we had just one practice session but we were confident that if we do the exchange well, we will win it," said Sudheeksha.

Sneha, who just returned to the country after winning the 4x100m Asian Relays gold in China, sat out the race to recover in the time for the individual events on Saturday.

Meanwhile, national record holder Tejas Shirse reaffirmed his grip as the leading hurdler at 13.61 while being pushed by Tamil Nadu's Manav R (13.66) and Karnataka's Krishik M (13.69) in a close men's 110m hurdles final.

The runner-up duo, however, failed to go past the Asiad qualification mark of 13.63. Tejas earlier breached the mark the day before during the heats by clocking 13.43.

Krishik may still be included for the Asiad squad given his strong showing in the season, including a personal best of 13.44 last month. While two athletes are expected to make the cut per event, the final selection is subject to nod by Athletics Federation of India.

Meanwhile in a comical error during the Heat 1 of the women's 400m hurdles, technical officials forgot to place all 10 hurdles on lane 8, ran by Tamil Nadu's Harshita R. The hurdler, who instinctively jumped over the hurdle on the lane 7 on seeing a hurdle missing, eventually clocked 1:01.03 to qualify for final. However, she is asked to run again on Saturday morning and clock below 1:02.00 to qualify.

Result: Men: 110m hurdles: Tejas Shirse (Mah) 13.61, 1; Manav R (TN) 13.66, 2; Krishik M (Kar) 13.69, 3.
Triple jump: Praveen Chithravel (TN) 16.92m, 1; Karthik U (Ker) 16.80m, 2; Selva Prabhu (TN) 16.79m, 3.
4x100m relay: Odisha 39.92, 1; Tamil Nadu 40.02, 2; Maharashtra 40.37, 3.
Hammer throw: Damneet Singh (Pun) 69.72m, 1; Praveen Kumar (Raj) 69.58m, 2; Ashish Jakhar (Har) 67.61m, 3.
Women: 4x100m Relay: Karnataka (Prakruthi Rao, Daneshwari T, V Sudheeksha, Unnathi Aiyappa) 44.75, 1; Tamil Nadu 45.07, 2; Maharashtra 46.21, 3.
Half marathon race walk: Munita Prajapati (UP) 1:45:05.00, 1; Reshma Patel (UP) 1:45:48.00, 2; Sejal Anil Singh (Mah) 1:46:31.00, 3.
Discus Throw: Seema (Har) 59.73m, 1; Sanya Yadav (Har) 56.05m, 2; Nidhi (Har) 55.92m, 3.
Mixed: 4x400m Relay: Tamil Nadu 3:23.51, 1; Punjab 3:23.54, 2; Rajasthan 3:23.85, 3.

India dominate rifle, pistol events

SUHL, PTI

Indian shooters topped the medals tally the ISSF Junior World Championship with seven gold, finishing the campaign in style through outstanding performances in the pistol and rifle events, despite drawing a blank in shotgun.

India finished with 24 medals -- seven gold, eight silver and nine bronze -- to top the standings, ahead of the Individual Neutral Athletes (AIN), who claimed 14 medals, including six gold, while powerhouse Italy finished third with 10 medals, also featuring six gold.

India's campaign got off to a flying start as Sejal Kamble won the women's 10m air pistol gold, while Himanshi claimed bronze.

A third Indian, Vanshika Chaudhary, suffered a bizarre heartbreak after failing to fire her final shot while in contention for gold and a possible junior world record, apparently due to confusion during the closing moments of the final.

That would have given India a rare clean sweep of the podium. he trio of Sejal, Vanshika and Navya Bishnoi then claimed gold in the team event to give India an early lead in the championship. India continued to remain on course as Sameer won gold in the men's 25m rapid fire pistol event and Rohit Kanyan emerged victorious in the men's 50m rifle 3-positions competition.

Cancer strikes Evert again

LOS ANGELES, AFP: Eighteen-time Grand Slam champion Chris Evert **(in pic)** says her "relentless" ovarian cancer has returned for a third time and she will soon start chemotherapy to combat the disease.

Evert, 71, said she would step back from professional duties, including broadcast duties at Wimbledon.

"I have always believed in being open and honest about my health journey," the US icon said in a post on X. "This past weekend, after undergoing CT and PET scans, I learned that my ovarian cancer has returned."

Stokes, Duckett lead England fightback

NOTTINGHAM, AFP: Ben Duckett scored his first century in over a year and Jacob Bethell banished his first-innings blues after returning England captain Ben Stokes sparked a fightback in the third and deciding Test against New Zealand at Trent Bridge.

England were 223-2 at stumps on Friday's second day, 215 runs behind New Zealand's first-innings 438, with the series level at 1-1.

Opening batsman Duckett made 113 to the delight of his sun-drenched Nottinghamshire home crowd. Together with Bethell (74 not out) he shared a rapid second-wicket stand of 179 in 30 overs after Emilio Gay fell for a duck.

Brief scores: New Zealand (O/n: 361/4): 438 all out in 114.5 overs (Tom Latham 151, Devon Conway 157, Henry Nicholls 36, Tom Blundell 30; Jofra Archer 2-75, Shoaib Bashir 2-105, Ben Stokes 4-70) vs England: 223/2 in 45 overs (Ben Duckett 113, Jacob Bethell 74).

Rounak shocks world No. 6 Chou

FULLERTON (US), PTI: Young Indian shuttler Rounak Chouhan **(in pic)** packed off world number six and top seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in straight games to create a big upset at the US Open here.

World No. 80, Chouhan, who was part of India's bronze medal-winning world junior campaign, defeated Chou 21-17, 26-24 on Thursday to set up a quarterfinal clash against Misha Zilberman of Israel.

The 18-year-old Indian kept the pressure on his more experienced opponent from the start and though Chou kept his nose ahead till 17-15, Chouhan won six straight points thereafter to pocket the opening game. Chou was the dominant player for most part of the second game before Chouhan once again bagged six straight points to draw level. It was a neck-and-neck battle thereafter as Chouhan saved four game points before converting his second match point to clinch victory in 49 minutes.

Also advancing to the last-eight stage were world junior silver medallist Tanvi Sharma, Rakshitha Sree and Devika Sihag in the women's singles.

Fifth seed Tanvi defeated Tung Ciou-Tong of Chinese Taipei 21-12, 21-19, Rakshitha got the better of Tung's compatriot Chen Su Yu 21-4, 21-19.

India fumble in shootout

LONDON, PTI: The Indian men's hockey team went down 1-4 to England in a penalty shootout after the two teams were locked 2-2 in regulation time of their FIH Pro League match here.

At the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre on Thursday night, Dilpreet Singh (10th, 58th) scored an impressive brace for India while David Goodfield (29th) and Nicholas Bandurak (56th) were on the scoresheet for England.

Later in the shootout, Thomas Sorsby, James Albery and captain Zachary Wallace converted their attempts for the hosts, besides one attempt that led to a penalty stroke.

Serena to face Joint first

LONDON, AFP

Serena Williams

Serena Williams was on Friday drawn to play Australia's Maya Joint in the Wimbledon first round as the American legend returns to singles action after four years.

Williams retired in 2022 but the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion made a sensational comeback by playing in the Queen's Club and Berlin Open doubles earlier in June.

The 44-year-old was given a wild card entry in the Wimbledon singles -- a tournament she has won seven times.

If Williams beats world number 53 Joint, a 20-year-old who has won just one of her past 14 matches, the American could face 29th seed rising star Alexandra Eala of the Philippines in the second round.

A victory in the second round would raise the possibility of a potential blockbuster third round tie against reigning champion Iga Swiatek, who starts her title defence against American Taylor Townsend.

In the men's singles draw on Friday, defending champion Jannik Sinner was pitted against Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic.

The Italian world number one has not played since suffering a shock defeat against Juan Manuel Cerundolo in the French Open second round in May.

Novak Djokovic starts his latest bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title against China's Wu Yibing.

The 39-year-old Serb has won Wimbledon seven times, but he has not triumphed there since 2022.

Djokovic earned his most recent Grand Slam crown at the 2023 US Open, with his last two major finals ending in defeat against Alcaraz at Wimbledon in 2024 and the Australia Open this year.

Rangers FC to face Gouthama FC in semis

BENGALURU, DHNS: Jude Abishek Satish (43rd) and Avinash Suresh (48th) scored one goal apiece as Rangers FC downed Freedom FC 2-0 during their BDFA C Division quarterfinal clash at the Bangalore Football Stadium on Friday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Rangers FC are set to meet Gouthama FC -- who defeated Rovers FC 1-0 in the other last-eight contest -- in the semifinal on June 29.

Results: BDFA C Division (quarterfinals): Gouthama FC: 1 (Deepak R 26th) bt Rovers FC: 0; Rangers FC: 2 (Jude Abishek Satish 43rd, Avinash Suresh 48th) bt Freedom FC: 0.
Pre-quarterfinals: Reds United FC: 5 (Sudarshan Kumar Sinha 2nd, 47th, Sriram SB 6th, 17th, 19th) bt Bangalore Mars FC: 0; Young Gems FC: 4 (Sanjay P 5th OG, Saravana Harharan 45th, 52nd, Aarayan V 60th) bt IISC FC: 0; Afghan FC: 5 (Darshan M 10th, 14th, 41st, Kiran S 12th, David Beckham 29th) bt Bentex FC: 0; Bangalore Phantom FC: 7 (Lumingtip Wanniang 14th, 32nd, 41st, Richardson Nongmaithem 30+2nd pen, Shiv Charan Mahto 51st, Whengbam Dishan Singh 30+1st, 31st) bt Agram FC: 1 (Ignatius Jhon 50th).

TEAMS: 48 VENUES: 16 TOURNAMENT SPAN: 39 DAYS

Plata pulls off Ecuador's great escape to victory

South Americans stun Germany to seal a miraculous knockouts berth

EAST RUTHERFORD (US), REUTERS

An increasingly desperate Ecuador stunned Germany 2-1 in their final Group E game on Thursday to drag their World Cup campaign out of the flames and qualify for a place in the last 32.

Needing a win -- or a miracle -- to keep their hopes alive, the South Americans suffered the worst possible start when already-qualified Germany struck in the second minute, with Leroy Sane opening his account at a major international tournament in his 15th appearance at one.

Ecuador	Germany
2	1

Ecuador had failed to score in this tournament despite 39 previous attempts, but finally broke their duck with their 40th shot when Nilson Angulo curled the ball beyond Manuel Neuer to spark wild celebrations among the sea of yellow in the stands.

Gonzalo Plata then bundled home the winner with 13 minutes remaining to complete Ecuador's stirring comeback as their fans erupted with joy at the sold-out New York/New Jersey stadium.

"It was incredible. We had a lot of faith and want our fans to know that there are 26 players here that will give their all for everyone in our country," Plata told reporters.

"People packed the stadiums wherever we played and made us feel right at home. They deserve this far more than we do. We struggled a lot in the first two matches but now we're even more determined.

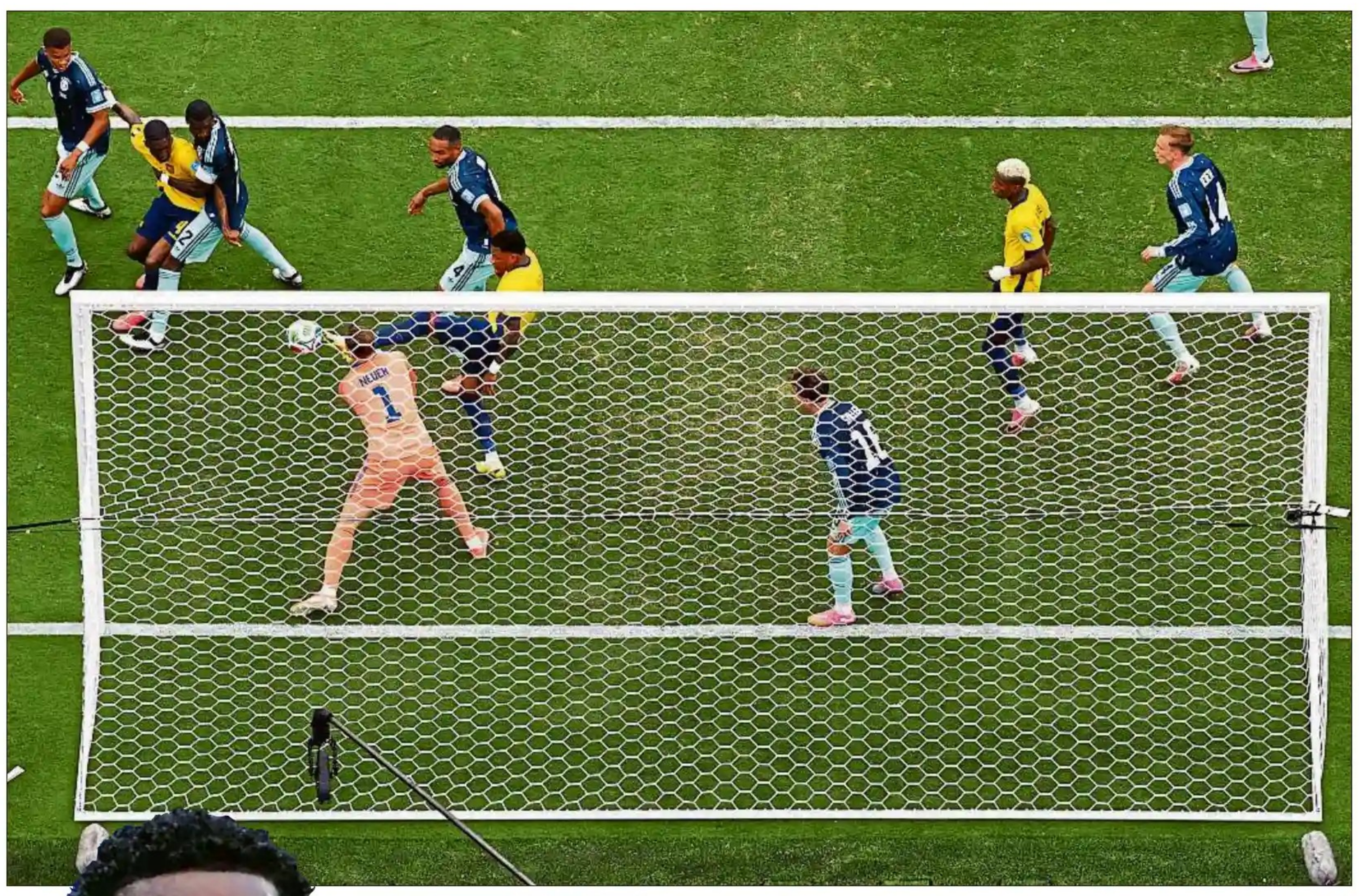
"We've learnt that you have to give it your all right up to the last minute, even if the goal doesn't come early on. Today we struggled right to the end and, thank goodness, it went our way."

Already assured of qualification as group winners, Germany finished top with six points, ahead of Ivory Coast on goal difference after the African side beat Curacao 2-0. Ecuador have qualified as one of the best eight third-placed teams.

Germany had been chasing a third win from three Group E matches and a 12th successive victory, but their defensive vulnerabilities were exposed again and they have now conceded in all three group matches.

"We keep inviting the opposition in with turnovers, making them look good in the process," captain Joshua Kimmich told reporters.

"Fortunately, no real harm has been done yet. But it's clear we can't afford another defeat. We can't keep conceding one or two goals every game. We need to minimise our turnover rate; then we can beat anyone."


Ecuador's Gonzalo Plata (fourth from right) jabs the ball past German keeper Manuel Neuer to net the winner on Thursday. AFP

Ecuador's Gonzalo Plata celebrates after scoring the winner against Germany. AFP

Germany started explosively, with Sane finishing left-footed from just inside the area in the second minute after Florian Wirtz cleverly found his teammate after a quick throw-in.

Ecuador protested that Aleksandar Pavlovic had caught Pedro Vite in the head with a raised foot in the build-up, but referee Tori Penso allowed the goal to stand.

Ecuador, who had arrived under pressure after a defeat by Ivory Coast and draw with Curacao, responded swiftly. Angulo curled the ball into the net from the edge of the box in the ninth minute, with goalkeeper Manuel Neuer slow to react.

The second half began with more controversy when Penso awarded Germany a penalty after Felix Nmecha played in Kai Havertz, who appeared to be tripped by Joel Ordonez.

After a VAR review, however, the referee overturned the decision for a Germany foul in the build-up.

Clear chances were then limited until Plata struck in the 78th minute, reacting quickest after substitute Kevin Rodriguez flicked on a corner at the near post and stabbing the ball past Neuer to send the stadium into uproar.

Pepe revels in historic day for Ivory Coast

PHILADELPHIA, AFP

Nicolas Pepe scored twice as Ivory Coast beat Curacao 2-0 on Thursday to reach the World Cup knockout rounds for the first time ever and bring the tiny Caribbean country's run at the tournament to an end.

Former Arsenal forward Pepe, now playing in Spain for Villarreal, opened the scoring for the Elephants after just seven minutes in Philadelphia and netted again just after the hour mark.

Ivory Coast finish with six points in Group E with this victory following their opening 1-0 win over Ecuador and a 2-1 loss to Germany.

Ivory Coast	Curacao
2	0

They therefore go through in second place behind Germany on head-to-head -- the Germans lost 2-1 to Ecuador in New Jersey at the same time.

The 2024 African champions had never previously got out of their group in three previous appearances at the World Cup, and their reward for this historic performance is a last-32 tie next Tuesday in Dallas.

That will be against the runners-up in Group I, which means a very tough test against either France -- the country where Pepe and several other Ivorian players were born -- or Norway.

Curacao, with its population of barely 160,000, had already made history just by being at the World Cup, but the smallest nation ever to reach the finals go home after finishing bottom of the section without a win.

Dick Advocaat's team were thrashed 7-1 by Germany on their tournament debut, but the high point came in their next game as they withstood a barrage to hold Ecuador to a 0-0 draw.

They couldn't repeat that performance here, but still did their fans proud in a game watched by a sell-out crowd of 68,324 at Lincoln Financial Field -- such an attendance on a Thursday afternoon is proof that the World Cup has definitely made its mark on the United States.

Ivory Coast's players celebrate after booking their round of 32 spot following a 2-0 win over Curacao on Thursday in Philadelphia. REUTERS

Dutch deluge drowns Tunisia

KANSAS CITY, REUTERS

The Netherlands surged into the World Cup round of 32 as Group F winners with a comfortable 3-1 victory over Tunisia on a rain-soaked Thursday, setting up a first knockout-stage clash with Morocco in Monterrey on Monday.

A thunderstorm warning cleared just in time for kick-off, but there was no delay to the Dutch on the pitch, who made the fastest start to a World Cup match since 2002 when they seized a 2-0 lead in just over six minutes.

Netherlands	Tunisia
3	1

The Netherlands capitalised on another error-strewn display from opponents whose calamitous tournament came to a fitting end after heavy defeats to Japan and Sweden and a coach change between their first two matches.

Some of the more than 68,000 fans in attendance left the stadium before the final whistle, as the result looked beyond doubt, as heavy rain and the weather alert did little to disrupt the match or dampen their enthusiasm.

Tunisia almost struck first in the second minute when Ismael Gharbi missed a clear chance, but the Netherlands moved ahead moments later as the North Africans' captain Ellyes Skhiri turned Denzel Dumfries' cross into his own net.

They doubled their advantage in the seventh minute, when Brian Brobbey grabbed his third goal of the tournament, finishing from close range after Virgil van Dijk headed a free kick back across goal.

The early burst gave way to a slower tempo, with the Dutch rarely troubled even as Tunisia threatened to get back into the contest in the second half, when Hazem Mastouri headed in Hannibal Mejbri's corner to reduce the deficit in the 54th minute.

Tunisia's momentum was quickly curtailed as the Netherlands restored their two-goal cushion eight minutes later when Jan Paul van Hecke powered home a header from Tijjani Reijnders' corner, with the ball deflecting off Anis Slimane on its way into the net.

Netherlands' Brian Brobbey (third from right) heads past Tunisia keeper Aymen Dahmen to score during their Group F clash in Kansas City on Thursday. REUTERS

Confident New Zealand scent Belgium scalp

VANCOUVER, AP

There are several World Cup teams ranked higher than New Zealand entering their final group-stage matches without any hope of advancing to the round of 32.

"That's not us," New Zealand coach Darren Bazeley said Thursday ahead of his team's match against Belgium on Friday. "We're now in a game where we win, we go through."

That scenario seemed unthinkable when the All Whites, among the lowest-ranked teams in this year's World Cup, were drawn into Group G with Belgium, Egypt and Iran.

But thanks to the expanded 48-team format and a group that has veered off script, New Zealand is one win away from advancing out of the group stage for the first time.

"It never works out like you expect it to," Bazeley said. "Football doesn't."

New Zealand players during a training session ahead of their must-win game against Belgium. AFP

A win against Belgium could push New Zealand into second place in Group G -- and therefore the knockout rounds -- if Egypt and Iran play to a draw in a match that will be played simultaneously on Friday.

Anything less than a win for New Zealand against Belgium would strip the All Whites of a shot at advancing out of the group stage.

"It's pretty black and white for us now, which is quite a nice thing," Bazeley said.

Tense battle awaits Egypt, Iran

SEATTLE, REUTERS

Egypt and Iran both go into their final group game on Friday with good chances of progress, but geopolitical tensions between Iran and co-hosts the United States — plus the nations' unease over local Pride celebrations — loom large over the match.

A first World Cup win for seven-times African champions Egypt, 92 years after their debut, put them in charge though Iran's dogged performances in draws with Belgium and New Zealand means victory could also see them top Group G.

The match will, however, be overshadowed by global events as the US and Iran seek to negotiate a lasting peace to the war launched by US and Israeli strikes in February, which quickly spiralled into a regional conflict. Iran has had to grapple with travel restrictions, which coach Amir Ghalenoei said made them the tournament's "most oppressed team", though the U.S. said this week that Iran would be allowed to travel two days before the game instead of one.

The tensions are made all the more acute by the fact that Iran winning the group potentially sets up a clash with the US on July 6 for a place in the quarterfinals. Long before that, though, Team Melli must overcome Egypt, who are buoyed by how they came from behind to beat New Zealand and assume control of a group which Belgium had been heavy favourites to win.

Captain Mo Salah will be looking to lead from the front when Egypt take on Iran. AFP

Egypt know a point is likely enough to top the group, which could tempt them to fall back into their familiar defensive mode despite letting loose in the second half against New Zealand.

The opportunity is there, though, to secure a last-32 game in Seattle against a third-placed team on July 1, possibly followed by a last-16 tie in the city, with Egypt based in nearby Spokane.

Friday's game is also Seattle's designated "Pride Match", a decision which was made before two countries where homosexuality is criminalised were drawn to play.

Socceroos smile with a knockouts ticket

SANTA CLARA, REUTERS

Australia booked their place in the World Cup's round of 32 on Thursday with a cagey 0-0 draw against Paraguay that left the South Americans facing a nervous wait to see if they will advance.

Australia	Paraguay
0	0

In a physical, scrappy contest at San Francisco Bay Area Stadium, Paraguay pushed late after being dominated early but it ended with the Socceroos making the tournament's knockout phase for a third time, four years after reaching the last 16 in Qatar.

Tony Popovic's team sealed second place in Group D behind co-hosts the United States and will meet the second-placed team in Group G, which remains wide open before Egypt face Iran and Belgium meet New Zealand on Friday.

Paraguay, on four points, may have done enough to advance as one of the eight best-finishing, third-placed sides but the 2010 quarter-finalists will need to wait for other results in the final group matches in the coming days.

Popovic made six changes to his starting 11 in a bold shake-up, bringing back livewire Nestory Irankunda and adding Cristian Volpato to his forward line in a signal of attacking intent.

With Jordan Bos switching from left back to right to cover for the injured Jacob Italiano, Australia made promising raids down the right but the finishing touch proved stubbornly elusive.

Minutes after kickoff, Volpato set up Jackson Irvine on the right of the penalty area but he thumped an angled shot straight at Paraguay goalkeeper Orlando Gill.

Bos and Volpato drew saves from Gill late in the half without genuinely testing the keeper.

Australia's Jackson Irvine (left) and Harry Souttar celebrate sealing round of 32 qualification with a 0-0 draw to Paraguay. REUTERS

TEAMS: 48 VENUES: 16 TOURNAMENT SPAN: 39 DAYS

FIFA WORLD CUP

WC sets all-time attendance record

The 2026 World Cup on Thursday became the best-attended in the tournament's history, surpassing the 1994 record of nearly 3.6 million spectators, FIFA said, reports Reuters from New York.

The announcement came during the second half of Germany's match against Ecuador in East Rutherford, NJ, as jumbotrons flashed with the new all-time high - 3,605,357 - to uproarious applause.

With 48 matches remaining, total attendance could nearly double the 1994 record, which had only 52 matches.

Czech striker Schick retires

Czech striker Patrik Schick said his international career was over on Thursday, hours after the Czech Republic bowed out of the World Cup with a 3-0 loss to Mexico, reports AFP from Prague.

The 30-year-old Leverkusen forward played all three games for the Czechs at the tournament and did not score as the team earned a single point for a draw with South Africa in Group A.

The injury-prone Schick has scored 26 goals in 56 games for the national team since his 2016 debut.

Canada first host to play outside

Canada advanced to its first-ever knockout round but also made history in a different way by becoming the first World Cup host to have to play outside of its borders, reports AP from Vancouver.

Canada's 2-1 loss to Switzerland on Wednesday will send the team south to Los Angeles to face South Africa in the Round of 32. A win or draw against Switzerland would have kept Canada in Vancouver for knockouts.

Pride flags on at Iran, Egypt clash

FIFA has reiterated that LGBTQ rainbow flags will be allowed inside Seattle's Lumen Field on Friday when the stadium hosts Iran and Egypt's World Cup G game, despite objections from both nation's football federations, reports AFP from Seattle.

Friday's game is part of city-wide events to celebrate Pride in Seattle, and was designated as the "Pride Match" by local officials before the identities of the teams.

On Saturday

Group F

Egypt vs **Iran** (08:30 am)

New Zealand vs **Belgium** (08:30 am)

On Sunday

Group L

Panama vs **England** (02:30 am)

Croatia vs **Ghana** (02:30 am)

Group K

Colombia vs **Portugal** (05:00 am)

Congo DR vs **Uzbekistan** (05 am)

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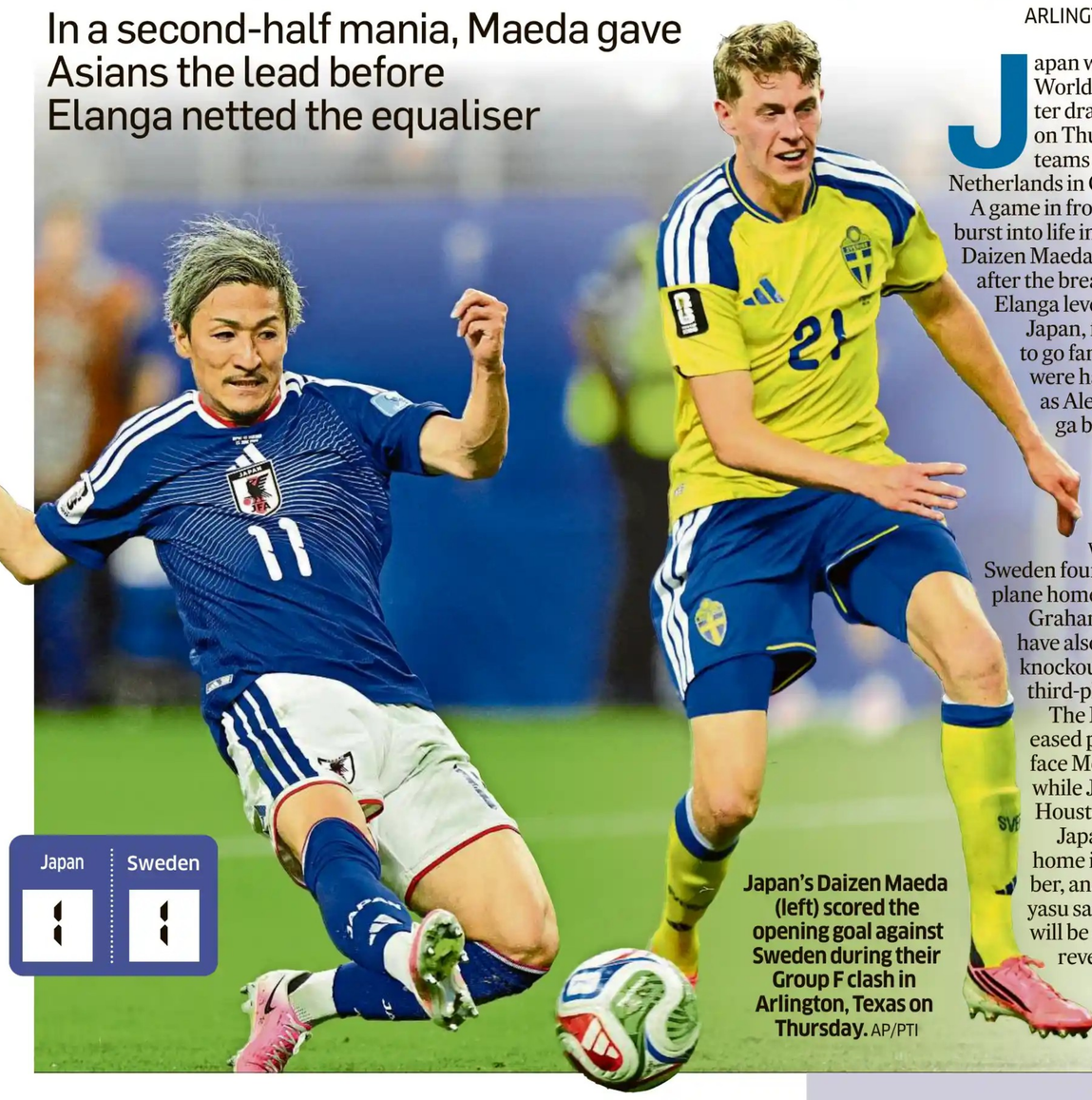
Japan set up great Brazil date

In a second-half mania, Maeda gave Asians the lead before Elanga netted the equaliser



Japan's Daizen Maeda (left) scored the opening goal against Sweden during their Group F clash in Arlington, Texas on Thursday. AP/PTI

ARLINGTON (US), AFP

Japan will face Brazil in a World Cup last-32 clash after drawing 1-1 with Sweden on Thursday to send both teams through behind the Netherlands in Group F.

A game in front of 70,000 in Texas burst into life in the second half, Daizen Maeda giving Japan the lead after the break before Anthony Elanga levelled minutes later.

Japan, fancied as dark horses to go far in the tournament, were hanging on by the end as Alexander Isak and Elanga both went close.

The Netherlands finished top of a competitive group with seven points, with Japan on five, Sweden four and Tunisia on the plane home with zero.

Graham Potter's Sweden have also qualified for the knockouts as one of the best third-placed finishers.

The Netherlands, who eased past Tunisia 3-1, will face Morocco in Monterrey while Japan play Brazil in Houston.

Japan beat Brazil 3-2 at home in a friendly in October, and coach Hajime Moriyasu said their opponents will be driven by a sense of revenge.

"Perhaps because of that match, they will be motivated even more," said Moriyasu.

"Yet we do believe that there's a chance for us to win," he added.

"And then we hope that we will be able to move one step further and get to the next stage."

Potter, whose side were torn apart by the Netherlands last time out, changed his goalkeeper and started Elanga.

"We had to defend the box and wide areas better," said the Englishman.

The former Chelsea and West Ham boss added: "The boys were fantastic. "Over the course of the game it was a pretty fair result and arguably we were slightly the better team in the second half."

It remains to be seen who Sweden will play next, but France loom as one possibility.

"It's a tricky one," said Potter.

"We need to be on our toes in terms of logistics, that's the fun part of the tournament."

Japan, Sweden and the Netherlands all came into the final round of matches with a chance of winning a tough group.

The Dutch and Japan, who drew 2-2 when they met, were virtually assured of progressing no matter what.

Sweden were also in a healthy position before kickoff, having thrashed Tunisia 5-1 before losing by the same scoreline to the Netherlands.

Only Tunisia -- who faced the Dutch at the same time on Thursday in Kansas City -- were out of contention.

The giant screen that hangs over the pitch at the air-conditioned home of the Dallas Cowboys flashed up two early goals for the Dutch, leaving them in pole position in the group.

Japan and Sweden were safe in the knowledge that a point was enough, and the paucity of chances in the first period reflected that.

The Premier League duo of Isak and Viktor Gyokeres had little impact in the Swedish attack, as a technically superior Japan dominated the ball.

On the stroke of the break Japan had the best chance of the first half, winger Keito Nakamura forcing goalkeeper Jacob Widell Zetterstrom to turn the ball around his post.

Moriyasu hopes success inspires Asian rivals

Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu hopes his side's World Cup exploits will inspire other Asian countries after footage showed Chinese football fans celebrating the success of their traditional rivals.

Hajime Moriyasu

Japan and China have often had fraught political ties, but some Chinese supporters in Shanghai put that aside to cheer Japan's 4-0 win over Tunisia.

Japan sealed their place in the last 32 on Thursday following a 1-1 draw with Sweden in Texas and face Brazil next.

Croatia, Ghana clash with a lot at stake

PHILADELPHIA (US), REUTERS

Croatia and Ghana go into Saturday's final Group L game with their World Cup destiny in their own hands when a draw could send both sides into the round of 32 and a high-scoring match is unlikely.

Ghana are second in the group, level on four points with leaders England. Croatia are one point behind in third, knowing they cannot finish any lower having beaten bottom side Panama, who have yet to earn a point.

Croatia are aware, however, that three points, and especially matched with a negative goal difference, may not be enough to earn one of the eight best third-placed berths in the knockout round, and will not be leaving anything to chance.

Both sides recorded 1-0 wins over Panama, but while Croatia opened with a 4-2 loss to England, Ghana held the group leaders to a scoreless draw to leave themselves in pole position to advance.

Croatia finished third in 2022, but four years on, the ageing squad's performances are giving coach Zlatko Dalic cause for concern.

Dalic called their defeat to England the worst set-piece defending of his nine-year tenure, and was unimpressed by their narrow win over Panama.

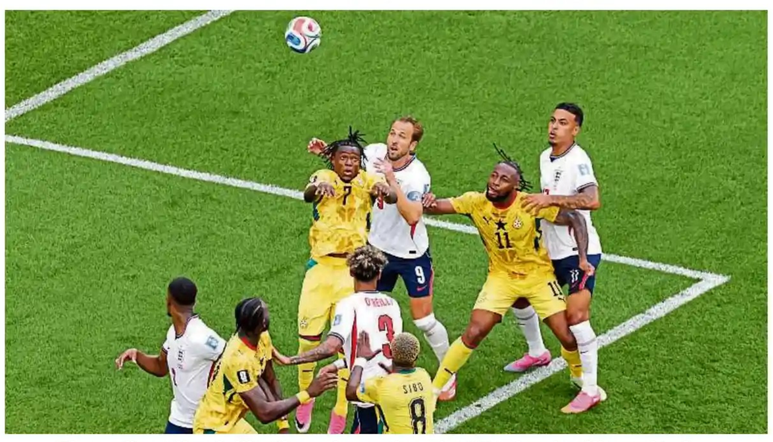
His side now face a defensively solid Ghana who frustrated England, and have turned things around after an uninspiring buildup to the tournament. Ghana lost four consecutive games once qualifying was wrapped up, leading to the dismissal of Otto Addo.

His replacement Carlos Queiroz has not had much time to prepare, taking charge of one friendly before arriving at the tournament, but in his fifth consecutive World Cup, the 73-year-old has restored the solidity they showed in qualification where they conceded six goals in 10 games.

This game is unlikely to be a goal fest. Ghana failed to register a shot on target in the opening half of their first two games, and Queiroz is unlikely to take too many risks knowing that one point will guarantee at least second place.

Croatia took fewer overall shots on goal than their opponents in the win over Panama, but did at least keep a clean sheet for the first time in eight matches.

The Croatians do have the advantage of playing their final game after nine of the 12 groups have concluded.



Ghana (in yellow), like they showed against England, will need to be defensively solid when they take on Croatia in a crunch clash on Saturday. AFP

England have puzzles to solve

KANSAS CITY, REUTERS

England's World Cup campaign has reached its first crossroads. A dazzling 4-2 victory over Croatia in their opener suggested Thomas Tuchel's side might finally have found the blend of talent and authority required to end six decades of hurt.

Harry Kane struck twice, England attacked with freedom and confidence, and the tournament suddenly looked full of possibility.

Then came Ghana. The goalless draw in Foxborough, Massachusetts brought England back down to earth, exposing the familiar frustrations that have haunted them at major tournaments.

For all their possession and attacking talent, they struggled to break down stubborn opposition and needed a late surge merely to inject life into a performance that felt increasingly flat.

England head into their final Group L match against Panama knowing finishing top of the group is within their grasp. They are level on four points with Ghana at the top and Croatia lurk just behind on three.

"There were good parts and parts we can improve against Ghana," Kane said. "It's nothing to worry about and hopefully we can put it right against Panama."

Tuchel will be keen to avoid final-day complications and restore some of the momentum lost against Ghana.

The spotlight will once again fall on Kane and Jude Bellingham. Kane remains England's talisman and most reliable source of goals, while

The onus of lifting a smarting England will rest on the shoulders of captain Harry Kane (back) and star midfielder Jude Bellingham. REUTERS

Nizhny Novgorod eight years ago in which Kane scored a hat-trick and England announced themselves as a force in Russia. They went on to finish fourth.

Saturday presents another mismatch on paper. England are targeting top spot in Group L and a place in the knockout rounds, while already-eliminated Panama are playing only for pride and the chance to end their tournament on a positive note.

The Central Americans arrived in North America after an impressive qualifying campaign built on defensive discipline and organisation, conceding only four goals in eight matches.

Portugal, Colombia eye top spot

MIAMI, REUTERS

When Portugal face Colombia in their final Group K match at the World Cup, both teams will be jockeying to get a result that ensures they avoid a potential nightmare scenario in the round of 32.

While Colombia have reached the knockout stages with six points from two games, Portugal sit on four points and are all but through, but qualification is only part of the story.

Topping the group carries extra significance, with the Group K winners assured of a gentler path into the knockout rounds by facing one of the best third-placed sides while the runners-up could potentially meet England, Croatia or Ghana.

"Honestly, sometimes we do look at what situations could happen. I'd be lying if I said we didn't look at what could happen if we finished second or third," Portugal winger Pedro Neto told reporters.

"But what matters most -- being Portuguese, with the mentality we have -- is always to be the best. So obviously we are going to face Colombia to finish first, even without knowing what may happen in the other groups."

Colombia, runners-up at the 2024 Copa America, have impressed in a campaign blending attacking flair with a resilient defence that has made them awkward opponents.

Three goals against Uzbekistan set the tone and a narrow victory over Democratic Republic of Congo underlined their patience when facing stubborn opposition.

Portugal's path has been bumpier. They drew criticism after managing just one shot on target despite completing 740 passes in a frustrating stalemate with DRC, before bouncing back with a 5-0 demolition of Uzbekistan.

As the doubts dissolved into celebration, the rout also ended all-time top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo's 10-game goal drought at major tournaments as the 41-year-old netted twice.

With Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Jr and Erling Haaland banging in goals in the race for the Golden Boot, Ronaldo was under pressure to deliver at his sixth World Cup.

While Portugal boast one of the tournament's most complete squads on paper, Colombia's physicality, counter-attacking pace and defensive organisation present a far sterner test than Uzbekistan.

A draw will suffice for Colombia to claim top spot, putting the onus on Portugal to seize control in Miami's stifling conditions, where temperatures are expected to hit 87 degrees Fahrenheit (30.5° Celsius) at kickoff.

Portugal's talismanic captain Cristiano Ronaldo. AFP

Battered Turkey restore some pride

LOS ANGELES, AFP

Turkey beat a heavily changed United States 3-2 with a late Kaan Ayhan winner in an action-packed dead-rubber clash that gave the World Cup co-hosts their sternest test so far ahead of the knockout rounds.

Already crowned Group D winners, the US arrived in Los Angeles seeking to extend a perfect start with a third win, but with more than an eye on next Wednesday's last-32 meeting against Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Turkey 3 USA 2

For Turkey, already eliminated and without even a goal after disastrous losses to Paraguay and Australia, the only objective was to restore some pride.

Despite the low stakes and substantially reshuffled lineups for both teams, a packed SoFi Stadium was in deafening mood.

For the third game running the US got off to a dream start. One of nine changes, backup center-half Auston Trusty was unmarked at the far post from a US corner, given time to cushion the ball with his left foot then blast it home.

It was the Celtic defender's first international goal, and -- at just under three minutes -- the second-fastest by the US at a World Cup.

But Turkey did not surrender. Having not scored in 62 efforts across their first two games, it was 63rd time lucky for the Turks, and their star man Arda Guler.

The Real Madrid forward duped Mark McKenzie with a clever dummy, allowing the ball to run down the right flank to Baris Alper Yilmaz.

Yilmaz crossed it back into Guler, who smashed it past Matt Turner to equalise in the 10th minute.

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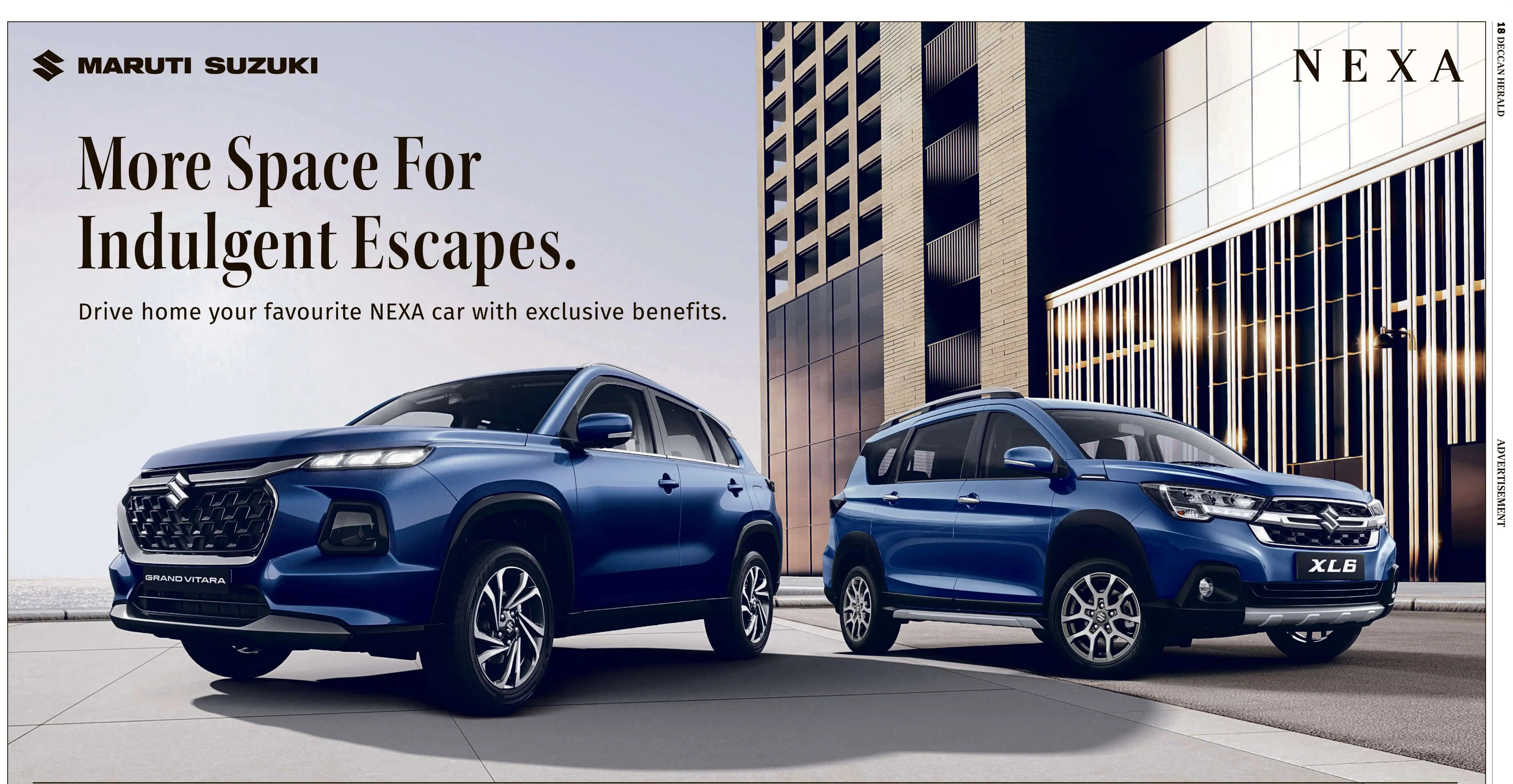

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DECCAN HERALD
Saturday, June 27, 2026

Wknd.

ADVERTORIAL & PROMOTIONAL LIFESTYLE FEATURE

OVER THE (JA)MOON

PAGE 02

YOUR ENSEMBLE SPEAKS...

PAGE 03

RETURN A MEMORY

PAGE 04

Show Buzz | Adah Sharma

'I'm trying to pick roles that are different and do things I haven't done yet...'

From Hindi to Telugu and Kannada to Marathi now, actress Adah Sharma has graced the silver screen in multiple languages, making her a truly talented multi-lingual artiste. After making her presence felt across several industries, the actor is now set for her Marathi debut in 'Gajra'. She has previously starred in one of the highest-grossing female-led Indian films 'The Kerala Story'.

The versatile artiste, who is known for her witty lines on social media, opens up about her journey in films, being her authentic self online and more in this chat with **Ikyatha Yerasala**

You have just signed your first Marathi film. Tell us about it.
The Marathi audience has given me so much love since my Hindi debut in 1920. I wanted the debut to be a grand one with a role that will be something out of the ordinary. When I decided to become an actor, my father told me that I should do one movie in every Indian language. I've done Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Kannada, and would love to do movies in Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali as well. If the script and my role is great, I will learn the language. I enjoy learning new languages. For now, it's Marathi and my debut is in and as 'Gajra'.

Tell us about your latest release, 'Governor'.
I have a cameo in the film. I play a journalist who is chasing an exclusive headline, who desperately wants a scoop.

Your upcoming film 'Super Velli' looks interesting, and you seem to play the role of a superhero in it...
'Super Velli' is a super hero but she's lazy and really doesn't want to save the world. It's an action comedy. I'm trying to pick roles that are different and do things I haven't done yet. So, there's something exciting for the audience to look forward to. I have done action before with 'Commando', 'Bastar', 'Reeta Sanyal' among others. They were all different. 'Commando' was larger than life, 'Bastar' was real and raw, and 'Reeta Sanyal' was fantasy - almost fairytale like.

Looking back at your journey from your debut in '1920' to now...
I have been in the business for 106 years - '1920' to 2026! I've had the opportunity to play villain and hero. I still pretend to be someone else on screen and sometimes off screen too. When I am successful, it feels nice.

What kind of characters are you still waiting to play?
I never thought I'd begin with a horror film and that the first time the audience would see me would be with black teeth - in '1920'. I never thought I'd be the heroine of a film that is the highest grossing female-led film of all time in India with 'The Kerala Story'. I want to play it all - everything from an earthworm to a kangaroo to a lady in a saree dancing on a snow-capped mountain because she's in love.

'The Kerala Story' generated enormous discussion. How did you process the public response to the film?
The response was fascinating. At one point, it felt like the film had stopped being a movie and had become a family WhatsApp group that the entire country had somehow joined. People brought their opinions, emotions, debates, concerns, support and criticism. As an actor, you rarely get to witness a project take on a life of its own like that. People promoting my film, fighting with opinions that were against the film, people I didn't even know standing up for me probably even more than my relatives was fascinating.

> When I decided to become an actor, my father told me that I should do one movie in every Indian language. I've done Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Kannada, and would love to do movies in Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali as well

How do you handle praise and criticism when a project becomes a part of a larger public conversation?
My relationship with public opinion is healthy. We wave at each other from across the street and continue living our separate lives. I see praise and criticism as road signs - helpful for direction but dangerous if you mistake them for the destination.

What goes into preparing for physically-demanding roles?
Training, discipline, negotiation with gravity sometimes, confidence, humility and lots of ice packs, laughs and tears. But I'm someone who enjoys not telling the audience the effort it took to get there. I feel that takes away the joy when they watch the film, it's not fair to them. It's like telling you how hard I worked to get this gift for you. I like surprising them.

Your social media personality is wonderfully quirky and funny. How are you so confident about showcasing your real self online?
Honestly, there is no policing on my social media. In a film, there's always someone who stops me from being fully unhinged. But on social media, I believe in my Instagram, my rules. So, what you get is unedited, terribly shot and shoddy quality but 100 per cent real emotion.

How do you spend your time offline when not working?
I like doing things that make me forget where my phone is. I enjoy disappearing into my imagination. It's the closest thing to a superpower we can have.

> I see praise and criticism as road signs - helpful for direction but dangerous if you mistake them for the destination

> My relationship with public opinion is healthy. We wave at each other from across the street and continue living our lives

Early attention can prevent serious complications in Varicose veins

Varicose veins are often dismissed as a cosmetic concern, but timely diagnosis and treatment can prevent complications and significantly improve quality of life, says **Dr Anoop T**, Consultant Vascular and Endovascular Surgeon, **Aster Whitefield Hospital.**

Varicose veins are among the most common vascular conditions, yet many people fail to recognise the early warning signs. While visible, enlarged veins are a well-known symptom, the condition often begins with leg heaviness, swelling, itching around the ankles, and persistent fatigue after prolonged standing. According to experts, identifying these symptoms early can help prevent the disease from progressing to more serious stages.

More than a cosmetic issue
Varicose veins occur when valves inside the veins become weak or damaged, causing blood to pool in the legs. Although some patients seek treatment because of visible veins, many experience symptoms even before noticeable vein enlargement appears. Persistent discomfort, swelling, and restlessness in the legs can all indicate underlying vein disease.

Who is most at risk?
People whose professions require prolonged standing, such as healthcare workers, homemakers, police personnel, cooks, and restaurant staff, are more susceptible to developing varicose veins. Smoking and family history can also increase the risk, while some individuals may develop the condition at a younger age due to inherited valve weakness.

Why early treatment matters
Ignoring symptoms can allow the condition to progress. Over time, increased pressure within the veins may lead to skin pigmentation, venous eczema, recurrent infections, and non-healing ulcers around the ankle. In advanced cases, weakened veins may rupture and cause unexpected bleeding.

Advances in treatment
Treatment for varicose veins has evolved considerably, with minimally invasive options largely replacing traditional surgery. Procedures such as radiofrequency ablation, laser ablation, and vein glue therapy can effectively close damaged veins with minimal discomfort and faster recovery times. Most patients are able to resume normal activities within a few days.

Dr Anoop T

Preventing progression
While varicose veins cannot always be prevented, simple measures can help slow their progression. Taking regular breaks from prolonged standing, using compression stockings when recommended, elevating the legs periodically, and staying physically active can all support healthy circulation.

Seek help before complications develop
Experts emphasise that varicose veins should not be ignored simply because they appear minor. Early evaluation and intervention can prevent long-term complications, preserve vein health, and ensure better treatment outcomes.

DH DECCAN HERALD
Wknd. DELIGHT

WEEKEND LIFESTYLE FEATURE

PRO TIP

A small bowl (50–100 gm) of fresh jamun consumed after a meal helps in digestion and controls blood sugar spikes

RICH IN NUTRITION

- Let one tradition be the main flavour and the other a complementary one. The flavours need to blend, not compete
- Jamun and its seed are popular in management of diabetes. The fruit has glycosides such as jamboline that help slow down the conversion of starch into sugar
- Rich in dietary fibre, jamun promotes regular bowel movements and prevents constipation. It is also used to soothe indigestion
- With its high Vitamin C content, regular consumption of jamun stimulates white blood cell production and strengthens the immune system

GOODNESS OF JAMUN

- Jamun is indigenous to the Indian sub-continent and has been consumed here for Centuries
- Its deep purple colour comes from anthocyanins - antioxidant compounds that, along with Vitamin C and dietary fibre, contribute to the fruit's nutritional density
- jamun is often relished with black salt or chaat masala to enhance its sweet-tangy flavour.

Over the (ja)moon

It's the jamun season and you can see the fruits piled up on carts almost at every street corner. **Deepa Natarajan Lobo** gets three chefs to share recipes for a purple treat this weekend

For a few fleeting weeks every year, jamun, or the Indian blackberry, makes its appearance on carts at street corners and fruit stalls, being the centre of attention with its deep purple hue. With its distinct sweet-and-sour flavour, the seasonal fruit brings back memories of rainy afternoons, purple-stained tongues and paper cones sprinkled with salt. Rich in antioxidants, Vitamin C and other nutrients, jamun is as wholesome as it is nostalgic. Beyond being enjoyed fresh, the fruit lends itself beautifully to a range of culinary creations. From elegant desserts to refreshing beverages, these recipes showcase the versatility of jamun and prove that India's beloved purple jewel is capable of much more than what meets the eye.

Jamun Tart

By chef Dilkush Rathore

What you need

For the tart shell:
- 200 gm (about one and two-thirds cups) of plain flour
- 100 gm (about seven tablespoons) of cold butter, cubed
- 30 gm (about quarter cup) of icing sugar
- One egg's yolk
- One teaspoon of vanilla essence
- A pinch of salt
- tablespoons of cold water (as needed)

For the filling:
- 300 gm (about two cups) of jamun, pitted
- 70 gm (about one-third cup) of sugar
- 30 ml (about two tablespoons) of water
- 8 gm (about one tablespoon) of cornflour
- 10 ml (about two teaspoons) of lemon juice

Preparation

Making the tart shell: In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, icing sugar and salt. Rub the cold butter into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Add the egg yolk and vanilla essence. Mix well. Add 1–2 tablespoons of cold water, a little at a time, until the dough comes together. Shape into a disc, wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Roll out the chilled dough and use it to line a tart tin. Prick the base with a fork and chill for another 15 minutes. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 180-degrees C for 18–22 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove and allow the tart shell to cool completely.

Preparing the jamun filling: Place the pitted jamun, sugar and lemon juice in a saucepan. Cook over medium heat for 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the fruit softens. In a small bowl, mix the cornflour with water to form a smooth slurry. Add the slurry to the jamun mixture and stir continuously. Cook for 1–2 minutes until the mixture thickens.

Remove from the heat and allow the filling to cool to room temperature.

Assembling the tart: Spoon the cooled jamun filling into the cooled tart shell. Spread evenly and chill for at least 30 minutes before serving. Slice and serve.

Pro tip: Garnish with fresh jamun, a dusting of icing sugar or a dollop of whipped cream for an elegant finish.

PIC COURTESY: THE DEN BENGALURU

Jamun Cooler

By mixologist Hemant Mundkur

What you need

For jamun cordial:
- One and a quarter cups of fresh jamun juice
- Half a cup of sugar
- One and a half tablespoons of lime juice
- A pinch each of salt and black salt

For jamun cooler:
- One and a half tablespoons of jamun cordial
- Half a cup of tonic water
- 2-3 fresh jamuns for garnish
- Ice cubes as required

Preparation

Jamun cordial: In a bowl, dissolve the sugar in fresh jamun juice. Add the lime juice, salt and black salt. Stir well until fully combined. Chill the cordial before use.

Jamun cooler:
Fill a tall glass with ice cubes. Pour in the jamun cordial. Top with tonic water. Stir gently to combine. Garnish with fresh jamun and serve immediately.

PIC COURTESY: HEYOU

Kaala Khatta Kombucha

By nutritionist Gauravi Vinay

PIC COURTESY: GAURAVI VINAY

What you need

For jamun compote:
- 500 gm of ripe jamun
- Quarter cup of water
- 2–3 tablespoons of coconut sugar (or 1–2 tablespoons of honey, adjusted to taste)
- One teaspoon of lemon juice
- A pinch of salt

For kombucha:
- Two tablespoons of jamun compote
- One tablespoon of lemon juice
- Quarter teaspoon of salt
- A pinch each of black salt and roasted cumin powder
- Half a teaspoon of ginger juice
- Kombucha to top up

Preparation

Jamun compote: Add washed jamuns to a saucepan with water and cook over low-medium heat for 10–15 minutes, until the fruits soften and start bursting. Lightly mash with the back of a spoon and allow to cool slightly. Pass through a sieve, pressing firmly to extract all the pulp. Discard the seeds and skins.

Return the strained pulp to the pan. Add coconut sugar and lemon juice. Simmer for 5–10 minutes until slightly thickened. If using honey, remove from the heat first, cool for a few minutes, then stir in the honey.

The compote will thicken further as it cools. Refrigerate in a clean jar for up to one week.

Assembling the drink:
Add the jamun compote, lemon juice, salt, black salt, roasted cumin powder and ginger juice to a glass. Stir well. Top with kombucha and serve chilled.

Pro tip: You can use ginger kombucha and skip the ginger juice for an extra kick.

LEISURE

Beetle Bailey

YOU HAVE LINT ON YOUR JACKET, SIR
THANKS
NOW COULD YOU GET RID OF THE FUZZ IN MY OFFICE ?
GREG + MORT WALKER
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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GOMLU

HFTIA

PTMEEX

NIVLIG

By year's end, you'll all understand clocks and calendars.
What's the circle with the pointy things?
THE STUDENTS WOULD LEARN WORDS LIKE "SECOND, MINUTE, HOUR, DAY, ETC." OVER A ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answers: MOGUL FAITH EXEMPT LIVING

The students would learn words like "second, minute, hour, day, etc." over a — LENGTH OF TIME

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HITORI-152

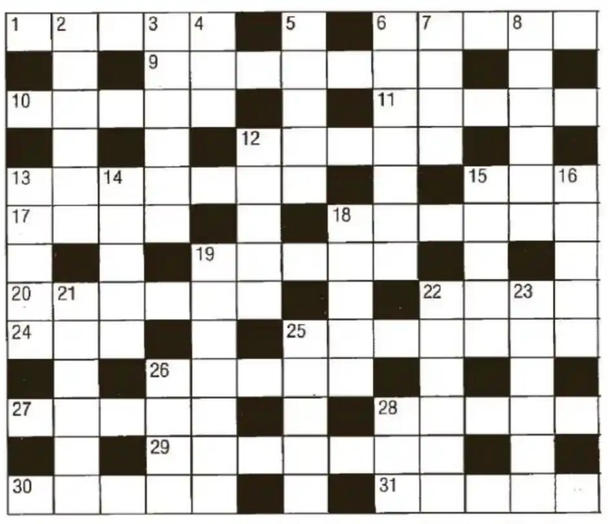
3	7	8	6	2	1	5	3
7	7	6	4	1	6	3	3
5	1	1	3	3	6	7	2
1	3	2	1	7	8	3	5
2	5	3	7	6	3	4	8
7	6	3	4	5	3	8	1
3	2	4	7	3	5	3	1
3	8	7	2	3	2	1	6

SOLUTION for HITORI-152

6	1	2	3	■	7	8	■
1	■	5	■	7	4	2	3
■	8	3	5	4	■	6	■
4	8	■	6	■	3	5	2
5	■	8	7	1	2	3	■
2	7	6	■	3	■	1	5
■	3	■	1	■	6	■	7
3	5	1	2	6	8	7	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 153



EASY

ACROSS
1 Recreation (5)
6 Might (5)
9 Previously (7)
10 Wash (5)
11 Turning machine (5)
12 Danger (5)
13 Rots (7)
15 Perform (3)
17 Poems (4)
18 Part of a diocese (6)
19 Flowering plant (5)
20 Followed (6)
22 Insult (4)
24 Fish eggs (3)
25 Vie (7)
26 Moroccan capital (5)
27 Ship's room (5)
28 Of the sun (5)
29 Friendly (7)
30 Pale (5)
31 Pasted (5)

DOWN
2 Drew (6)
3 Responds (6)
4 Brown (3)
5 Insects (5)
6 Aquatic bird (7)
7 Spoken (4)
8 Morals (6)
12 Conceited (5)
13 Lobby (5)
14 Feeling (5)
15 Passageway (5)
16 Fraction (5)
18 Fulcrum (5)
19 M East country (7)
21 Wanderers (6)
22 Leisurely walk (6)
23 Anxiety (6)
25 American 'sweets' (5)
26 Cereal crop (4)
28 Droop (3)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
1 Such letters constitute mail, naturally (5)
6 Dress the wounds of a dog? (5)
9 When a spider gets entangled, it's hopeless! (7)
10 Salute with tears in one's eyes? (5)
11 Endless calls? (5)
12 Money for food (5)
13 Quarrelled over a terrible umpiring decision (4,3)
15 Fiendish fate? (3)
17 The responsibility isn't on you (4)
18 Smooth, for example, in a lot of rough treatment (6)
19 Sadness at Stamford Bridge? (5)
20 Toy with one's food? (6)
22 Live on a ship (the Queen Elizabeth?) (4)
24 Caught in some shady deal (3)
25 About to go to a place for meeting a government department (7)
26 The tag can be all wrong (5)
27 Dishonest talk about a point (5)
28 One possible icon involved in an architectural order (5)
29 A movie we back (7)
30 A piano in a thousand (5)
31 A vital man, when up to this, is full of tension (5)

DOWN
2 Get tough (6)
3 Due to certain criteria, is out of business (6)
4 It can catch creatures, but not by the gross (3)
5 Wear ostentatiously, just for fun (5)
6 Plagiarists fit only to mash praties (7)
7 Redhead to help out in getting dry (4)
8 Strong, firm little fellow (6)
12 Germ the French get, being of sound military significance (5)
13 Not back for the tough outer casing (5)
14 Transparent lid covering a portion of duck (5)
15 Scoffed in threatening fashion (5)
16 Put the light out and have a party with Sue, perhaps (5)
18 Woman twice left out, and that's straight! (5)
19 Cried and suffered when interrupted by tea, unsuitably (7)
21 Bacon's right for Jane (6)
22 Buzz off and get one free (6)
23 Looking up, lying (6)
25 Regular payments in the current series (5)
26 Green fabric? (4)
28 Trouble getting half a firkin! (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 153

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 1, Chain 6, Patch 9, Despair 10, Greet 11, Rings 12, Bread 13, Fell out 15, End 17, On-us 18, L-e.g.-ato 19, Blues 20, Trifle 22, Be-SS 24, Had 25, Re-venue 26, Label 27, Ch-E-at 28, Ionic 29, We-stern 30, Grand 31, Key-ED (up).
DOWN: 2, Harden 3, I-deal-s 4, Net 5, Sport 6, Pirates 7, A-r-id 8, Co-gent 12, Bug-le 13, For-t-h 14, L-uc-id 15, Eaten 16, Do-use 18, L-Eve-L 19, Bl-eat-ed 21, R-Asher 22, Beg-one 23, Supine 25, Rents 26, Lawn 28, Irk.

EASY
ACROSS: 1, Sport 6, Power 9, Earlier 10, Clean 11, Lathe 12, Peril 13, Festers 15, Act 17, Odes 18, Parish 19, Lupin 20, Ensued 22, Slur 24, Roe 25, Contend 26, Rabat 27, Cabin 28, Solar 29, Cordial 30, Ashen 31, Glued.
DOWN: 2, Pulled 3, Reacts 4, Tan 5, Flies 6, Pelican 7, Oral 8, Ethics 12, Proud 13, Foyer 14, Sense 15, Aisle 16, Third 18, Pivot 19, Lebanon 21, Nomads 22, Stroll 23, Unease 25, Candy 26, Rice 28, Sag.

Wknd. TREND

Invite friends over for a day of food, music, games and walking down memory lane. It will be a memory etched on everyone's mind forever

MONSOON MEMORIES

WEEKEND LIFESTYLE FEATURE

FAMILY TIME

Set up some board games for quality family time. It's a great opportunity for the family to come together and bond over some fun and good food. Order food to avoid spending time on cooking and put away the phones. Let the rains strengthen family ties.

WEEKEND AWAY

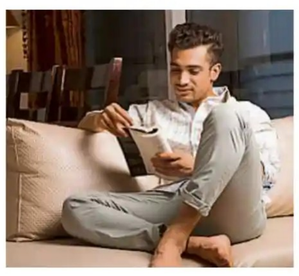
A short trip to a hill station or even a staycation will give you the break you are looking for. The rain is a good excuse for a getaway. A scenic destination looks even more stunning in the rains. Ensure you take the necessary precautions if you are planning a trek.

Monsoon Moods

Slow Down

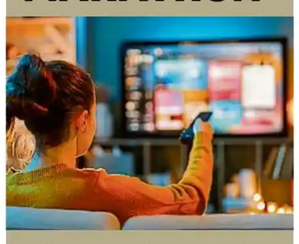
This is a great time to slow down after the hectic summer months and enjoy the cool weather. The monsoon brings a unique ambience and the first two months are always a welcome break. It's time to protect yourself from seasonal infections and make the most of the season.

Reading nook



Set up a cosy reading nook for those rainy weekends when you would rather not step out, much less drive. Ensure a handy corner table to keep your books or journals on along with the endless cups of coffee. Settle down with some finger food and catch up with all the reading you have been putting off.

MOVIE MARATHON



This is a good time to binge on some movies. Pick a few from a genre you like and watch them through the day. It will give you the break from work you need on a rainy weekend and some much-needed rest. Stay indoors and take a movie break.

CLICK AWAY

The rains bring some amazing photo ops. Go out and click away to make a mark with your Insta handle. Torrential rains, drops creating ripples on puddles, birds sheltering in the trees and perhaps a rainbow. Get the photographer in you going.

Cook Top

What better time than now to try your hand at some tasty bites? Cook some typical rainy day snacks such as onion pakodas. Give your diet a break and binge on those savouries as you watch the rain do its stuff. Just sitting by the window is therapeutic on a lazy weekend.

Your ensemble speaks before you do

Pooja Ravi has some tips on the art of making a lasting first impression

Style File

Before you say 'good morning', your outfit has already introduced you. It may seem unfair, but within seconds of meeting someone, people begin forming opinions about your confidence, competence, credibility and even your attitude. Whether you like it or not, first impressions are often visual. The encouraging truth, however, is that you have far more control over that narrative than you might imagine.

Power dressing is often misunderstood. It isn't about designer labels, sky-high heels or owning a wardrobe straight out of a fashion magazine. Instead, it is about recognising that every colour, cut, fabric and accessory communicates something about who you are. The question then is - what message are you sending out?

A sharply-tailored blazer conveys authority. Soft, muted colours create a sense of warmth and approachability. Structured silhouettes suggest confidence and professionalism. Conversely, neglected grooming or poorly-chosen attire can undermine even the strongest credentials, often speaking louder than an impressive resume.

Think of your wardrobe as your personal public relations team. Every morning, it helps tell a story about you long before you say your first word. Most successful people understand this subtle but powerful form of communication and use it intentionally.

Four As of power dressing

At the heart of effective dressing are 'four As':

- **Appropriate:** dress suitably for the occasion and environment
- **Authentic:** let your clothing reflect your personality and values
- **Attractive:** present yourself in a polished and visually-appealing manner
- **Affordable:** build a style that is sustainable and realistic for your lifestyle

Style is never measured by the price tag. It is measured by the impression it leaves behind.

Accessories make a difference

Then comes the transformative power of accessories - the punctuation marks of personal style. A classic watch, an elegant pair of earrings, statement necklace, structured handbag or even a thoughtfully-selected belt can elevate a simple ensemble. The secret lies in balance. Accessories should enhance your presence, not overshadow it. After all, sophistication often reveals itself through the smallest details.

Curated wardrobe

Contrary to popular belief, the most powerful wardrobes are not the largest ones. They are thoughtfully-curated collections built around timeless classics, versatile neutrals, enduring patterns and pieces that can be styled in multiple ways. Intentional dressing always outperforms impulse buying.

Quality, versatility and purpose create a wardrobe that works harder and smarter.

Groom for impact

Equally important, yet often overlooked, is grooming - the unsung hero of personal branding. Polished shoes, neat hair, well-maintained nails and attention to detail communicate discipline, self-respect and professionalism. In many situations, these seemingly minor elements are what distinguish a person who is merely dressed from someone who appears truly distinguished.

Ultimately, power dressing is not about becoming someone else. It is about aligning your outward appearance with your inner strengths. When confidence, competence and presentation work together, something remarkable happens. People stop focusing solely on what you are wearing and begin remembering the presence you brought into the room.

In a world where first impressions are formed in moments, dressing with intention is not vanity - it is strategy. Fashion trends may come and go, but confidence, elegance, thoughtful accessorising and a powerful first impression never go out of style.

Because your clothes are already talking. Make sure they are telling the right story.

Colour blocking is a simple and effective fashion trick. **Jayanthi Madhukar** gets stylist **Sandhya Srinivasan** to share some tips on mastering the look

BLOCKS OF COLOUR

Colour Code

Colour blocking is a longstanding fashion style where two or more colours are combined or stacked in blocks. Pairing two or more solid colours in bold, defined sections, instantly brightens an outfit and lends it a modern, graphic edge. Whether achieved through a single garment or by combining separates, colour blocking offers endless possibilities.

Match the intensity

For the strongest visual impact, pair colours with similar saturation levels. Bright hues work best with other bright hues, while pastels sit comfortably alongside softer shades. Fabric texture also influences how colour is perceived, so keeping textures consistent helps maintain a cohesive look.

Begin with neutrals

If bold colour combinations feel intimidating, start with a neutral base. White, black, grey, beige and brown provide an easy entry point into colour blocking. Combinations such as black and white, blush pink and beige or grey and yellow create contrast without overwhelming.

Introduce a third colour

A colour-blocked outfit need not stop at two shades. A third colour, used sparingly through accessories such as a handbag, belt, jacket or shoes elevates the overall look. A vivid accent against a monochrome palette creates a focal point and adds personality.

In dresses and one-piece outfits, abstract colour-blocked designs achieve a similar effect.

Keep separates simple

Smart colour-blocked outfits rely on solid colours rather than prints. Jeans with a brightly-coloured top is an easy place to start. Coordinated separates in similar fabrics, such as silk trousers paired with a silk top, can make the look feel more refined.

The same principle works well with Indian attire too. A kurta and salwar in contrasting solid colours creates a striking effect without appearing busy. A dupatta or stole in a third shade completes the look. If patterns are unavoidable, go for subtle self-coloured textures that do not compete with the colour story.

Choosing colours

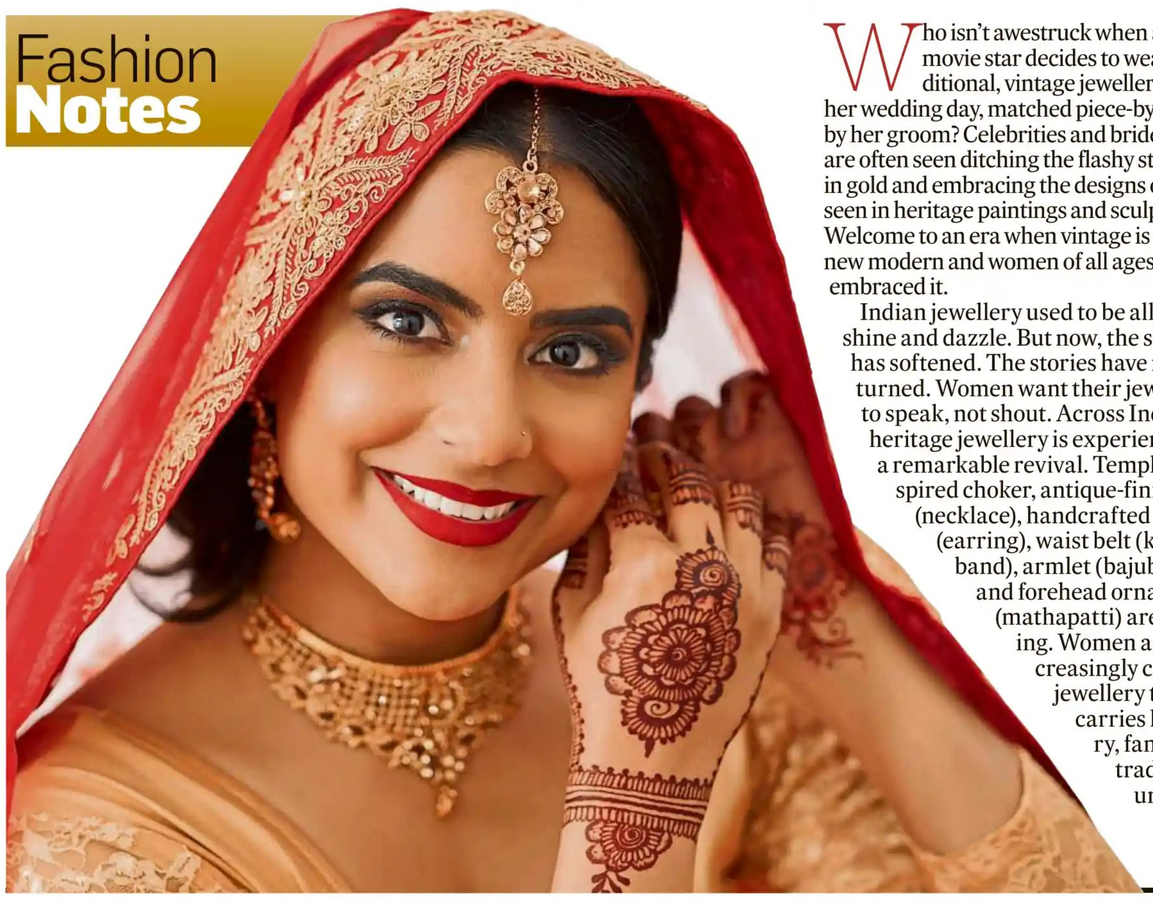
The colour wheel offers a useful guide. Colours positioned opposite each other, such as blue and orange or purple and yellow, create dramatic contrast and work particularly well in festive and ethnic wear. Neighbouring shades on the wheel, meanwhile, produce softer, harmonious combinations that remain vibrant without feeling over-powering.

For those experimenting with three colours, select shades that are evenly spaced around the wheel. The classic combination of red, yellow and blue is a good example. To maintain balance, follow the 60-30-10 rule - let the dominant colour occupy roughly 60 per cent of the outfit, the secondary shade 30 per cent and the accent colour the remaining 10 per cent. Typically, neutrals anchor larger pieces such as trousers, skirts or coats, while brighter shades appear in tops and accessories.

Vintage designs in the limelight

Vintage is the new modern in jewellery designs, says **Swatee Jog**

Fashion Notes



Who isn't awestruck when a mega movie star decides to wear traditional, vintage jewellery on her wedding day, matched piece-by-piece by her groom? Celebrities and brides alike are often seen ditching the flashy styles in gold and embracing the designs often seen in heritage paintings and sculptures. Welcome to an era when vintage is the new modern and women of all ages have embraced it.

Indian jewellery used to be all about shine and dazzle. But now, the shine has softened. The stories have returned. Women want their jewellery to speak, not shout. Across India, heritage jewellery is experiencing a remarkable revival. Temple-inspired choker, antique-finish haar (necklace), handcrafted jhumka (earring), waist belt (kamarband), armlet (bajuband), and forehead ornament (mathapatti) are trending. Women are increasingly choosing jewellery that carries history, family tradition, unique craftsmanship and cultural memory rather than mere sparkle. "Many people are no longer asking 'how expensive is it'. They are asking, 'what's the story behind it' these days", says Indumati M, a veteran jewellery collector from Mysuru. Her 26-year-old granddaughter decided to wear her jewellery for her wedding this May.

Vintage superstars

At the heart of this trend is the necklace stack, a regal combination of a close-fitting matte finish choker layered with one or more traditional haars such as Ranihaar or a coin necklace. Then comes the jhumka that captures Indian femininity better than anything else. Whether crafted with pearls, temple motifs, filigree work or antique gold finish, it frames the face with grace and movement. Paired with flowers in the hair, the jhumka steals the show.

Another heritage piece quietly making a comeback is the waist belt, known in different regions as kamarbandh or oddiyanam. Once reserved for brides and royalty, it is now appearing at festivals, receptions and cultural celebrations. "It changes the way she carries herself", notes Vasundhara Rajan, a fashion consultant. "There is a certain dignity that comes with wearing vintage jewellery. Today's bride wants to own her heritage", she says.

The mathapatti, adorning the forehead, tells a similar story. Far removed from fleeting fashion, it evokes images of queens, temple sculptures and miniature paintings. It draws attention to the face, and frames the hair and face, making it extremely attractive and structured.

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A mix of materials makes the gift wrapping unique and demonstrates your thoughtfulness

PRO TIP

WEEKEND LIFESTYLE FEATURE

WRAP IT RIGHT

Your gift needs to be wrapped based on the occasion and person you are offering it to. If it is a formal event, stick to consistent colours for the wrapping paper and ribbon. Ideally, go for plain paper. Too many colours will take away the formal ambience of the event and gesture.

PERSONAL TOUCH

Give your gift a signature. Tuck some dried flowers or even a small cinnamon stick under the ribbon, for example. It makes the packaging unique and gives the gesture a personal touch sure to be noticed. Use natural material such as jute to make a statement.

Return a memory

Swatee Jog has some ideas for a thoughtful return gift that becomes a treasured keepsake

We have all been through that rigmarole - finding the perfect return gift for your wedding, only to know that several others have already done that. Weddings today are no longer just grand celebrations - they are curated experiences. Why should return gifts be something common? Couples are moving away from predictable return gifts and choosing keepsakes that speak about their personality, their hobbies and tell a story to remain memorable long after the wedding.

Here are a few unique ones:

Gift Box

Vintage mini radio

If music bonds you as a couple, a vintage-inspired portable radio evokes memories of simpler times while serving as a beautiful decor piece for guests. Modern versions often include Bluetooth connectivity and rechargeable batteries, blending retro aesthetics with present-day convenience.

A small vintage radio on a bookshelf, work desk or bedside table instantly adds character to any space. It is a return gift that appeals across generations, from grandparents who remember the golden era of radio to younger guests who appreciate retro design.

Handmade jam/ marmalade

What can be more personalised than handmade food? Small glass jars filled with artisanal jams, citrus marmalades or exotic fruit preserves make elegant and delicious return gifts for guests to savour.

Imagine guests taking home flavours such as orange marmalade with cinnamon, strawberry basil preserve, mango ginger jam or mixed berry compote. Beautifully packaged with personalised labels carrying the couple's names and wedding date, these gifts create warmth and authenticity.

Tea box

Tea has long been associated with hospitality, warmth and meaningful conversations. A beautifully-crafted vintage tea box filled with exotic tea blends creates an elegant and sophisticated return gift. Consider including selections such as Kashmiri Kahwa, Darjeeling First Flush, Chamomile Lavender, Hibiscus Rose, Earl Grey and Masala Chai blends.

The vintage box itself becomes a treasured keepsake, while the teas provide a delightful experience long after the wedding festivities have ended.

Disposable single-use camera

Yes, even when the best DSLR camera is the norm, a disposable camera brings back the magic of anticipation. Place a camera on each table or gift one to every family, encouraging guests to capture candid moments from their perspective. The beauty lies in not knowing what photos have been taken until the film is developed. The result is often a collection of authentic, heart-warming, and sometimes hilarious memories that professional photographers might miss.

The camera itself becomes a keepsake, while the photographs become priceless memories.

Mini electric hand fan

Summer weddings need cool breeze and it's not possible every time. That's why mini rechargeable electric hand fans are leading the trend. Compact, lightweight and useful during travel, commuting, outdoor events and summer months, they are gifts guests will actually use. Available in elegant pastel shades, metallic finishes or custom wedding colours, these fans combine functionality with contemporary design while also looking very Instagrammable.

Every time guests use them, they'll remember the thoughtful hosts who anticipated their comfort.

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The ultimate guide to creating a cosy reading corner at home

Nothing beats having a cosy spot in your home where you can kick off your footwear, sink into a comfortable chair, switch on a lamp and read your favourite book, especially in a time where we're all consumed by digital media. The feel of turning the pages and delving deep into a story is an experience like no other. But, if you're thinking of building such a spot in your home, from scratch, then here are some tips to propel your idea.
city will only command higher rentals in the years to come. Should you find a better pasture elsewhere and relocate, your house here will be a lucrative investment that will command good rentals and yield a high capital return as well. The key, however, is in wise choices.

The right spot matters
Your reading nook has to be warm and inviting; it should make you want to pick up a book and read. Look for a quiet corner in your home where interruptions are minimal. A space near a window is an added advantage, as natural light creates a warm and inviting atmosphere during the day. Unused corners in bedrooms, living rooms, balconies, or even the space under staircases can make for excellent reading spots.

Get yourself a comfy chair
A reading nook doesn't come to life until there's a plush chair that lets you lose track of time. Since comfort is key here, choose a chair that is ideal for long hours of sitting, whether it's an upholstered armchair, a recliner, a window seat, or a plush floor cushion arrangement. The goal is to let you get lost in between pages without your back bearing the brunt of it.

Personalise your reading nook
Now that the heavy lifting is done, you can add some cushions, a cute throw and a coffee table so your hot cuppa is always beside you. Arrange your books according to genre, colour or even size, and add a few book-related decor items to bring the bookshelf to life.

Shed some light on your books
The second-most important item to add to your reading nook is the perfect source of light. Sure, if you've set it up by the window, then that is enough during the day, but during the evening, a good reading lamp is essential. Opt for a floor lamp, wall-mounted sconce, or adjustable table lamp that provides focused illumination without causing glare.

Limit distractions in your nook
Reading takes concentration and the fastest way to lose that is to have a TV or your phone with you. Make your reading nook a distraction free zone to enjoy reading, not to discuss work, watch TV or scroll through your phone.

Bring nature indoors
Plants can enhance the sense of calm in a reading space. Whether it's a leafy indoor plant beside your chair or a small succulent on a side table, greenery adds freshness and creates a more soothing environment.

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